

C.P.

M O R A L I T Y,

EXTRACTED FROM THE

C O N F E S S I O N S

OF

S A I N T A U S T I N .

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MORALITY,

EXTRACTED FROM THE

CONFESSIONS

OF

SAINT AUSTIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ GROU,

BY

ALEXANDER CLINTON.

VOL. I.

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M,DCC,XCI.

MORALITY

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN

OF THE 13TH CENTURY



TOO much of the
taken to bring man to rest on
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ALEXANDER, CLINTON
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and on his duties, and to engage
him to examine the principles and
the rules by which he should
govern his conduct, leaving in
confusion and disposition, more
than any thing else, the cause
of his going astray of his time,
of his forgetting in
pursuing

P R E F A C E.

TOO much pains cannot be taken to bring man to reflect on himself, on his own nature, on his passions, on his destination, and on his duties ; and to engage him to examine the principles and the rules by which he should square his conduct. Levity, inconsideration and dissipation, more than any thing else, are the cause of his going astray, of his unconcern for God, of his forgetting su-

pernatural truths, in order to follow the impressions of the senses, and of his finally losing his faith and religion. There are few who are wicked in cool blood, and from system. Most are carried away by their passions, by seduction and human respect, which are the ordinary consequences of the want of reflection.

Upon this account the morality that brings us home to ourselves, and gives us a knowledge of ourselves, has at all times been considered as the most interesting of all sciences; and those who have taught it the best, have been deemed the greatest benefactors to mankind. The authors who have treated on it with success,
are

are the most read and the most esteemed; and the most renowned philosophers of antiquity owe their reputation to it.

It is by morality, much more than by speculative reasonings, that the human mind is informed, the heart is captivated, and morals are corrected. It is also by the allurements of a false morality that men are seduced and perverted. This is the artifice which many writers, in our days, have employed, and Rousseau in particular. His hypocritical zeal for good morals, which he annuls whilst he seems to vindicate them; his eloquent, but extravagant and virulent declamations against the vices which he tacitly favours, and

even paints in amiable colours; his tone, his language which apparently speaks probity and virtue, have brought him more followers and admirers, than all his paradoxes and sophisms.

I mean by a false morality, not only that which is grounded on pride, on interest, on voluptuousness, which concentrates man within himself, and teaches him to refer every thing to himself; but also that which, resting totally on human reason, sets aside all revelation, and reduces all to the natural law as interpreted according to the fancy of every individual. It is a principle of St. Austin, that philosophy and religion cannot be separated. It is also a principle

ple that is to be found in the idea of all nations, that religion must be revealed, and must have God for its author. If therefore the christian religion be the only one, the revelation of which is well proved and certain, the christian morality must be the only true, the only morality that sound philosophy can admit of; and every other morality which deviates from that, or opposes it, must either be imperfect, or false, and even detestable. From hence it follows, that we are not to seek for true morality in the writings of the Heathens, even the most celebrated, such as a Plato, a Cicero, a Seneca, an Epictetus, an Antoninus; nor in those who have copied them,

them, such as a Montaigne, a Charron; much less in the false sages of our age, whom the most honest and the ablest among the Heathens would disavow. It is in the Gospel, in the writings of the Apostles, in those of the Fathers of the Church, the worthy interpreters of the holy Scriptures, in which it is to be found.

Much has been written against unbelievers, either to confute their systems, or to answer the objections made to revelation and to the proofs of it. These works were undoubtedly necessary, and we cannot sufficiently applaud the zeal and the talents of those who have undertaken them. But it seems that a proper attention has
not

not been paid to a display of the christian morality, in its full purity, in its full extent, and in its full beauty. And yet of all the characters of the Divinity, which Christianity announces, that is the most striking, the most within the reach of every mind, the most proper to convince and to persuade.

This is the object which I have proposed to myself; and the better to succeed, I have taken for my guide and master the greatest philosopher, the profoundest theologian, the most exalted genius, and the greatest soul; in a word, him who is acknowledged to be the first Doctor of the Church. The maxims and the reflections
of

of St. Austin shall be my basis. I have chosen out of his numerous writings those sentences which seemed to admit of the most advantageous display; and I begin with his confessions, which are the most known among his works:

I have preferred detached sentences to a regular and followed plan of morality. I think that in these matters the effect is the same as to instruction, and in other respects variety is more pleasing: it fatigues the reader less, by giving him rest and intervals of reflection in the transition from one sentence to another; and by this means I avoid the dryness and the tediousness of the didactic order. Besides, those who are used

to

to a pious lecture in the day, will find here a proper subject in every sentence; and I hope that each one will be sufficient to nourish the heart throughout the day.

The translator begs leave to inform the reader, that the present work was published in France four years ago by the author. And being informed that no more copies can be had of the original, he has the more readily ventured on a translation, especially as he considers it, to be incomparably the best book of the kind he ever met with. He conceives that no one can read it with an attentive, upright and impartial eye, without great benefit and improvement both of mind and heart; *in this view alone it is offered to the public.*

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MORALITY.

M O R A L I T Y,

EXTRACTED FROM THE

CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUSTIN.

I.

*Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord,
and our heart is restless until it rests in
thee. B. 1. c. 1.*

THIS sentence is the first principle of morality, and accounts for the agitation of the human heart. Man is made for God, and only for God; that he may possess him here below through faith, and possess him hereafter in eternal glory. He seeks in vain for rest in the fruition of any other object.

Our reason tells us that God is the creator of the universe, and that he cannot have created it but for himself. Our reason also tells us, that as in this universe man is the only intelligent free being, and the only one capable of raising himself up to God by thought, and of uniting himself to him by love; on his own account, as well as on the account of every other creature that is made for his use, he owes to God the homage of his mind and heart: a homage which constitutes the essence of religion, and which all the nations of the earth admit of as an indispensable duty. There is nothing that is less foreign to us, nothing that is physically more intimate to us than God; and nothing to which we ought to be more closely united by a moral union.

The same truth is taught us by revelation; but after a more distinct and extensive

extensive manner, and better proportioned to our minds. We are informed that man is made to the image and likeness of God, carrying in the very essence of his being the indelible marks of the Divinity; in so much, that it is impossible for him to inspect himself, and to think on the state in which he was created, on the sin by which he fell from that state, and on the mercy of God which raised him from that fall, without perceiving the necessary relations he has with him.

An impious and scandalous philosophy has dared to disavow these relations; but in all countries, and in all ages, this philosophy has been abhorred by the people, who, being enemies of systems, and guided by their moral instinct, never refine so far as to renounce their first and innate principles: and all the most enlightened and virtuous philosophers have opposed it

with all their might, and condemned it. Political authority also has proscribed it, even among Pagans, and has not permitted it to prejudice either the public worship, or the laws and morals.

Religion therefore supplying what reason could not manifest to man, has taught him the worship which the Divinity exacts of him; and what he has to fear, or hope for in another life. It has intimated to him the great precept of the love of God, as the first of his duties, and the commandment to which all the others bear a relation.

But besides these proofs drawn from reason and revelation, there is another which we carry in our heart. Let us attentively examine our inward desire of happiness, which constitutes the love of ourselves; and the characters of this same desire which has for object a bliss that is sovereign, infinite, eternal
and

and unchangeable; we shall find that the human heart constantly tends towards God; that it seeks him as the only source of its happiness; that such is its natural propensity, that it never is at rest or satisfied, whilst (deceived by the senses, by the imagination and passions) it adheres to any other object. Then its agitation is continual; disgust follows fruition; fruition is never complete or peaceable; it always leaves room either for fear or hope, or some other new desire: this is an infallible proof that God is the center of the heart of man, and that without this center he can have nothing to expect besides sorrow and indigence.

Let us be candid and in earnest, and we shall be forced to own that this is a truth against which we have ever vainly attempted to struggle. As long as we made our God of our riches, honors or pleasures, as long as we expect-

ed to find in them our happiness, so long were we infallibly disappointed. An interior voice was telling us, thy happiness is not there; all these things do not satisfy thee; thy desires extend to more than thou possessest; thy heart does not cease to ask, and whatever thou grantest serves but to excite new cravings. Thou hast experienced, it is true, some moments of intoxication; but does the happiness of a rational being consist in intoxication, and in the alienation of reason?

And those instants of pleasure, with what trouble and pains were they purchased? By what remorsees were they closely followed? From whence sprang that shame that attended them? Why was secrecy procured? From whence that fear of a discovery? We dare not even flatter ourselves that a happiness so like this has any reality. We must first forget ourselves, we must
fly

fly from ourselves, we must banish ourselves from our reason and from our conscience, before we can give ourselves up to the tyranny of our passions, those insatiable monsters, who never say, it is enough. Such is the life of the avaricious, the ambitious, and of the voluptuous. There are not two different opinions on this matter; they themselves, when brought back to reflection, are forced to agree to it, and to blush at their illusion.

O God! can a life like this be a happy life? and can it deserve to be fought after at the expence that is requisite to attain it? Were there an eternal fruition annexed to it, it could be no more than an eternal torment, from the disgust which is inseparable from satiety. No one ever has existed, and no one ever will exist, who can find his rest in things created, even supposing that he were not molested in the

B 4

possession

possession of them, and that a thousand accidents, and finally death, did not snatch them from him. Whosoever refuses to accede to this truth, is still either in the intoxication of his passions, or his conscience belies him. Our heart therefore is in a constant agitation, as long as we seek for rest in any thing but in God.

But is this rest which we constantly sigh after to be found in God? Yes; and this also is a fact that is attested by all those who have ever been faithful to him, or have returned to him again from their former transgressions.

Were you to ask good and virtuous Christians of every age, rank and condition, if, while they met with no reproach from their conscience, they were in a state of tranquillity and contentment, they all, without exception, would answer in the affirmative. But have they not their troubles, their
cares

cares and solitudes of life? are they not liable to accidents, inconveniences, and various contradictions? Are there not many who linger under indigence, sickness and infirmities? have they no injustices, calumnies and vexations to experience? But these and such like trials only skim the surface of their soul, and reach not the interior; they enjoy peace of heart, and an inward rest; they are submissive to the will of God, and this submission constitutes at once both their merit and their happiness. A happiness, imperfect, it is true; but there is no other here below. But a happiness that is real; a happiness which they would not exchange for any other situation, that were to be obtained by unlawful means, and by their hazarding the loss of the grace of God.

However it must be confessed, that the generality of Christians, who extend

tend their care no further than to the observance of the commandments, by shunning gross and considerable transgressions, and are not entirely devoted to God's service, do not taste so much as is possible to taste upon earth how sweet the Lord is. They possess the ground-work and the substance of happiness in the calm of their conscience; but they are liable to trouble and anxiety; they have their disquietudes concerning their salvation; they think with fear on death and the judgments of God; they have too much sensibility in the difficulties of life; they suffer much from their own imagination, their self-love, and a thousand little passions by which they are agitated: not however so far as to lose their essential peace, but this peace might still be greater and more tranquil.

Who then are those who possess this perfect rest? They who have given them-

themselves totally to God; who have made over to him the care of all their interests and concerns; who let themselves be guided by his providence, and study faithfully to follow the motions of grace. Such Christians as these, whether in the world, or separated from it, are above the world and all its vicissitudes; they are settled in a region which the evils here below cannot reach. Occupied with fighting against, and overcoming themselves in all things, they attain, from a series of victories, a peace that nothing can molest or disturb. They are unacquainted with anxieties and scruples; they are not disquieted at the thought of futurity, neither do they shrink at the idea of death and of its consequences. They have placed all their confidence in God, and let what will happen, they well know that he will not forsake them. They no longer live in themselves,

selves, but in God. Undisturbed in his bosom, they are screened from all fear with regard to this life and to futurity. I have already said that there is no perfect happiness upon earth; but that which such souls as these are in possession of draws the nearest to it, and no other is comparable to it. They nevertheless have their sufferings, and sufferings of a supernatural cast; sufferings which are above all expression, and of which experience alone can give a conception. But the love of God lifts them up, and carries them to accept, to cherish their sufferings, and prompts them even to a desire of suffering more. They are determined to suffer as long as it shall please God, without allowing themselves the liberty of a wish for an end, or even a diminution of them. Thus do they find in pain, their peace, their repose, and their delight.

This

This is incomprehensible to them who have not experienced it; but it is the unanimous deposition of souls that are versed in spirituality. If worldlings have said with some sort of truth of profane love, that all other pleasures are not worth the trouble which they cost, how much more must it be true of the love of the Being who is infinitely amiable.

II.

What am I, O Lord, that thou shouldst command me to love thee; and if I fail, that thou shouldst be irritated against me, and threaten me with great evils? Is it then a small evil not to love thee?
B. 1. c. 5.

A HEART impressed with humility dictated these sentiments to S. Austin. What need, does he say to God, hast thou

thou of my love, that thou shouldst call for it by a commandment? What am I to thee, I who am nothing of myself, corruption through sin; to thee who art essentially self-existent, who unitest all perfections, or rather who art perfection itself. What can the possession of the hearts of thy creatures bring to thee? Did they not love thee, wouldst thou be less that which thou art? Is not the knowledge of thee sufficient to inculcate the obligation of loving thee, and to engage them of their own accord to discharge this duty to which their happiness is annexed?

It is but too evident that God, to be happy, stands not in need either of us or of our love. The Father knows himself by his Word, infinite, like himself; the Father and the Word love each other in the Holy Ghost, infinite like them. But the property of goodness

ness is self-communication. This infinite goodness has engaged God to create intelligent beings, in whom he has placed a ray of light that lifts them up to himself. He would be loved by them, because whosoever knows him, cannot be dispensed with from loving him. He would have this love to be free, to be a love of choice and of preference; because he designed to give himself as a reward to the creature, who from choice should love him; and the reward supposes the merit, and the merit, the use of free will. Besides, it is only in a free love on our part that the glory of God, which is the end of all his works, can be found; and now he is glorified by the love of the blessed in heaven, only because it was free in its source.

Thus a precept of loving God was indispensable. But this precept is all in our favour; for it is impossible that
the

the happiness of an intelligent creature should be found in any thing but in the love of God: and were he not to solicit this our love by his ineffable charms, the reward accruing from it is so great, that the offer alone of that should be motive sufficient to engage us to love him: for who can refrain from loving a Being who is infinitely beneficent, infinitely liberal, who promises the eternal possession of himself to all who will love him?

Was it necessary that God should employ fear, to bring us to love? That he should threaten us with his wrath, and with the greatest of evils, with an eternal fire? Is it not a shame to the creature, that God should make use of such means? Does a father threaten with disinheritance his son, to gain his love? And what account would he make of a love which he could no other way obtain?

This

This, however, is to what God has been reduced, in consequence of the permission of sin. He knew the inward imperfection of our nature. He foresaw that man, notwithstanding the rectitude in which he had created him, would offend him by his disobedience, and would prefer his own gratification to his duty. He also knew how deep a wound original sin would give to the heart of man, and what disorders would flow from self-love, that is become predominant in us by the fall of our first parent, and by our own personal falls. He did not think that he could take too many measures to secure to himself the love which is due to him, and by this love to secure our happiness. Let us stand confounded. These measures, humiliating as they are, suffice not. Neither the wrath of God, nor the eternal torments with which he threatens us, can bend or draw to

so lawful, so reasonable a love the heart of the greatest part of mankind. Though instructed by revelation, though assisted by grace, though invited by the most powerful motives, Christians, not only some, but by far the greatest number, consent to lose themselves for ever, rather than to love God. Who could conceive such an excess of blindness and folly, did not their conduct so evidently prove it? Can man possibly be such an enemy to himself?

His misfortune comes from want of reflection, and from letting himself be led away by his passions. Sensible objects captivate him, intoxicate him, enchant and unman him. He forgets God; he forgets his first duties; he loses sight of his dearest concerns, which he sacrifices to vain, cheating, and fugitive pleasures, which, when he has purchased with pain, they leave his
heart

heart as empty and famished as ever, and rob him of his health, wealth, honour and rest, and deliver him up to the ^{most} cruellest remorse.

*Be ye astonished O heavens at this, does God say by the mouth of Jeremiah, my people have done two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.**

Such is the misery into which man plunges himself here, to fall hereafter into a misery that is infinitely greater, in which he will remain for ever. He knows his present unhappiness; he knows that he cannot escape his future unhappiness; in vain does he attempt to affect ignorance: reason and religion speak too loud not to be heard, nor can he impose silence upon them. All his resource is to turn as deaf an

* Jer. c. ii. 12, 13.

ear as he can, and to live as it were in despair. Is it then so gloomy, so dreadful and insupportable a thing to love God, as rather to chuse to expose one self to all sorts of evils both present and to come?

Ah! how remote from these sentiments is the Christian who has tasted of divine love! How horrible and monstrous do they seem to him to be! He considers with St. Austin, that not to love God is a great evil; nay, the greatest of all evils. He shudders at the very idea of being deprived of this love. The carnal man, reduced by his passions beneath the brute, does not conceive this. He thinks it chimerical to love God, a pure spirit, which his eyes do not see, which his hands do not touch. He treats as enthusiasts and fanatics the pious and the saints. He knows no real love but that which terminates in sensible objects.

But

But the day will come when his idea and language will change most wonderfully. The enchantment of earthly pleasures will pass away. His insulated soul, reduced to itself, enlightened to see true and false happiness, eternally deprived of both, will find itself suddenly in a horrid void. It will tend with all the impetuosity of its desires towards the sovereign good for whom it was made, and for ever will it be repulsed. It will know, but too late, to its misfortune, the infinite loveliness of God; it will know, that, far from possessing him, it will hate him for ever, and for ever will be hated by him; which cruel assurance will produce in it an interior torment, incomparably greater than the pain of fire, dreadful as it is.

Yes, faith teaches us (and if here on earth we were sufficiently acquainted with God, reason alone would unfold

the idea) that the pain of loss is the most terrible torment in hell. In fact, let us figure to ourselves a soul devoured with the desire of its happiness, removed from every object that formerly amused, seduced and cheated it, and now replete with aversion to them all; destitute of every inward resource, clearly seeing, but with a view by far more penetrating than all that can be had here below, that God alone can make it happy; intimately certain that it is deprived for eternity of the enjoyment of him; for ever besieged by this distressing idea, without a possibility of removing it, not even for an instant. Add to this, the despair for being the sole cause of its misery. What a violent situation! a situation of inexplicable violence, which incessantly will act upon all the powers, and the very center of the soul.

This

This torment is the only one which God, all-powerful as he is, cannot render supportable. I am going to advance what is astonishing, but true. The fire of hell is terrible; the fire of the most incensed furnaces is, in comparison, but a painted fire; nevertheless God can communicate to a soul a degree of love that is sublime enough to render it capable of bearing this pain, not only without impatience and complaint, but without even a wish of being freed from it. And it seems that this is the case with the souls in purgatory, who peaceably wait for their purification, and for a complete satisfaction to the divine justice. But as to pain of loss, such as the reprobate endure, it is not susceptible, in any one of them, of the least mitigation: and as long as it subsists, God has no means to hinder the effect, which is to

render him superlatively miserable who experiences it.

If it be a great misery not to love God upon earth, it is a misery which is not well known but by those who love him. But in hell it will make itself be felt, in its fullest extent, by those who in this world made no account of it; and who, on the contrary, looked upon the love of God, as an obstacle to their happiness.

III.

*As I grew in age I entered further into
the tempestuous society of human life.*

Book 1. c. 8.

THIS is not so much a sentence, as it is a beautiful and magnificent image, full of morality. Human life is an ocean ruffled with storms, occasioned

sioned by the passions that agitate and discompose it. We are born, as I may say, on the shore of this ocean. Our infant state is the hope, the resource, the recruit of society; but, in some respects, we do not as yet belong to it. We begin to know something of it; we prepare ourselves to enter into it, and dispose ourselves to play our part, in proportion as we grow up, and as our ideas, our passions and views are unfolded. The first sight of this wide ocean is all smile and pleasure; we have no perception either of its depth, or its dangers. The calmness of the shore, the sand which we feel under our feet, the easy and insensible descent, the example and encouragement of those who are already embarked, unitedly invite and seduce us into the party; we advance, and fearless we gradually plunge deeper, till losing our footing, we are forcibly pushed on by the waves that

that carry us into an open sea, where we become, like those who went before us, the sport of the winds and of storms.

Thus it is that the human race only becomes acquainted with the rocks and miseries of life but from fatal experience. We learn at our own cost what the world is ; with a heavy heart we presently discover the illusion and vanity of it ; we repent our having gone so far, we could wish to draw back, or at least to take different steps and measures for our greater safety ; but it is too late. The winds are boisterous, the storm heightens, and no longer can we steer the wished for course ; inevitably must we perish, unless a favourable wind comes to our assistance, and wafts us into a safe haven.

Behold how the torrent of society successively carries down, and precipitates

tates into ruin the members that compose it. The different ages, the different situations in life mutually seduce and corrupt each other. The authority and maxims of old age, the example and conduct of riper years, the charms, the sprightliness, the impetuosity of youth; the success of some, the hopes of others; the power, credit, wealth, wit, and talents jointly concur to lay inevitable snares to all who enter into life. At starting, we must wind ourselves up to the prevailing pitch of the fashion; we must think, we must speak, we must act as others do; without which we are exposed to mockery and contempt, and often to violence and oppression. We are excluded and rejected; all avenues to promote our interest are precluded, and we are pointed at as whimsical and singular, at once useless to our ourselves and others.

The

The preservative from so many evils would be an excellent education; but the height of the misfortune is, that the world itself presides over this education, draws up the plan, and dictates the maxims that are to be learnt. It directs the march, and early forms its pupils to its views; it deeply impresses its principles on the mind, and insinuates itself into the heart, and bends the rising inclinations towards the prevailing vices in society. This master reads its lessons with such ascendancy and controul, that it hardly can be resisted. What it inculcates the most is, that it must be respected and feared; that its laws and customs must punctually be observed; that its approbation and censure must be placed above every thing else.

Christian parents, and such as are solidly virtuous, strive to prevent the influence of such lessons, by inspiring their

their children with a spirit of piety, and engraving on their soul the great truths of religion. There are, in fact, no other means; but they ought not readily to trust others with so delicate a concern: they themselves should engage in it, and consider it as the most important of all their duties. The precepts of a father, the tender admonitions of a mother, supported by the force of their example, make on the minds of children impressions very different from the lessons of a stranger, who often undertakes the task through mercenary views, and is generally destitute of that authority, zeal and affection which are necessary for an instructor; and often from this deficiency the inattention and indocility of youth take their rise.

As soon as St. Austin had the use of speech, his mother taught him to pronounce the name of God, and to invoke

voke him. Thus did she sow, though at a distance, the seeds of his conversion; and when he grew up, though a libertine and a manichean, he never lost a relish for religion to that degree, that he took no pleasure in any book in which he did not find the name of Jesus Christ.

It would be proper to add to religious instructions short, simple, and natural reflections and observations on the vanity, the deceit, and the dangers of the world. Children should be taught very early to see things in their proper light, and such as they are in themselves; and with regard to persons, they should be set on their guard against appearances. They should be accustomed to inspect their own heart, and there to study the emotions and passions of it, that they may be enabled to account for the motives that lead them to action: to this discovery, seasonable
and

and unaffected questions would be very conducive. Their little palliations and dissimulations should never go unnoticed; they should all be gradually formed to the knowledge of others, by the knowledge of themselves: and as occasion serves, with proper discretion, only for their benefit, and never from a motive of criticism; they should be put in the way of discerning from the countenance, the comportment, the words, the exterior demonstrations of men, the real sentiments of their heart. I could also wish that they had set before their eyes the striking, and even recent examples of those men and women who have ruined their health, their fortune, their reputation, by gaming, by debauchery, by avarice, by ambition, or by any other passion.

Children carry in their heart the first principles of morality, as well as the first buds of corruption; these latter

ter are but too soon unfolded; they, therefore, should be made to see, by reasons and examples proportioned to their capacity, the woeful consequences that attend a gratification of them: they should have explained to them, how the passions, which are at first flattering and insinuating, by degrees become our masters and our tyrants, and lead us to greater lengths than we were aware of: what empire the senses have over the soul, and to what pitch they captivate, degrade and brutify it when once they are indulged in their demands. It will not be difficult to find proofs for all this in the faults of childhood.

In respect to morality, it is necessary to give children the highest idea of it. It should be represented to them as a science the most beautiful, the most satisfying to the mind, the most nourishing to the heart, and the most necessary

sary in life; but, at the same time, they should be well informed, that all morality that is detached from God and religion is destitute of foundation; and that the maxims by which we are guided in the course of time, are no farther true and solid than they bear a relation to eternity.

Such lessons as these variously and prudently given, without pedantry or affectation, accompanied with a certain air of persuasion and a certain effusion of heart, above all supported and enforced by the character and behaviour of him who gives them, must inevitably be most useful and agreeable to the pupil, who is supposed to be ready to imbibe them; they will be by far more beneficial to him, they will form his mind better, they will elevate his soul in a manner much superior to the dry lessons of history, of geography, and even of natural philosophy, which have no

other advantage than that of embellishing the memory and of gratifying curiosity.

All that is interesting in philosophy, is reduced to morality; it is of an immense extent; our whole life is not too long for the study of it, and the more we cultivate it, the more new discoveries do we make. A child well conducted is capable of making a greater progress in this science than is generally imagined: when once he is put in the way, and exercised to consult his reason and his conscience on all that is interesting to him, he will form himself by himself, without the help of a master. His very faults will be an instruction to him; the world, in which he is to appear, will not be able to seduce him; at least he will be cautioned and put on his guard against the first impressions, which are the most dangerous; and should he unfortunately fall into the snare, he will have light enough

enough to perceive it, and sufficient resources to extricate himself from it.

How comes it that young people of both sexes, educated in colleges and convents, notwithstanding the pains that were taken to fix them in virtue; in the course of two or three years of mixing with the world, so much alter their ways as hardly to be known again? I venture to say that one of the chief causes of it is, that the piety which they were taught was bare and superficial, of which the principles were not engraved on their heart, and that they were not sufficiently made to know what they had to fear from the world and from their passions.

The greatest part enter into life without having the least idea of it; they hear maxims as new as they are imposing; every thing strikes them, astonishes them, and attracts them; human respect lays hold of them; they

fear to be railed at, criticised and despised, should they distinguish themselves from others. What a sudden and strange subversion in their ideas! What a wonderful impression does the shew of the world produce in their heart! The passions are roused, reason is soon gained over, and religion is brought to silence. They are ashamed to appear to have any piety, of which should they but retain any sort of practice, the duty is secretly discharged, and presently it is totally omitted: they even come to a contempt of it, as a weakness of youth. Bad books, plays, parties of pleasure and assemblies give the finishing stroke, and render the evil almost incurable.

It is, therefore, important to be acquainted with the world before we engage in it. And as young people cannot acquire this knowledge by themselves, others should give it them, and
distantly

distantly prepare them for the hazards they are to run.

It is objected, that it is better that children should be left in ignorance on that head. This is true to a certain degree, and to a certain age. As long as there is room to presume that they preserve their first innocence, the opening of their eyes would be dangerous. Neither do I mean to say, that mention should ever be made of some certain delicate articles, which only belong to the tribunal of penance. But when the moment is come, the tutor may, and ought to carry his instructions much further than they are commonly carried, particularly relating to the dangers to which virtue is exposed, to the precautions which ought to be taken, to the occasions which ought to be avoided, to the artifices, the insinuations, the deceits which the world makes use of, to the vanity of

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its pleasures and the reality of its pains.

In general it is proper to teach them to be very diffident of others, but more so of themselves, because the source of our errors lies in our own heart; to resist the fresh onset and allurements, because if they yield at first, the consequences are hardly any longer in their power; to be aware of taking for their rule the conduct of the greatest number, because the number of the good and virtuous is never the greatest; to avoid ever acting through mere complaisance, and at the first attack to shew such resolution as shall stifle every hope of ever being conquered; to establish a regular mode of life, and of continued occupations, in order to avoid tediousness and idleness, which naturally lead to dissipation; to appear only in public when necessity or due civility require it; to form to themselves

selves a society of virtuous friends; and, as to books, greatly to guard against novelty and curiosity, by never reading any but such as are good, virtuous and rational; and particularly to chuse a good and virtuous friend, whose superior age and experience will readily engage them to follow his judicious counsels.

IV.

The amusements of riper years bear the name of affairs. B. 1. c. 9.

THE plays of youth are trifles and toys; they are considered as such, and are called so; but the occupations of riper years are held in a different light. They are termed affairs, and even affairs of the highest importance. Nevertheless, if considered in themselves, they are equally trifles and amusements

of grown up children. The value which is set upon them, the quick animation which they excite, the ardour with which they are pursued, have hardly more foundation than the motives which inspire children with so much heat and vivacity in their play.

This was the idea which St. Austin formed of them. Was he mistaken? Hardly any one will hesitate in his answer. Yes, it is said, he was mistaken; and the facts themselves affirm it more loudly than words can do. But before we condemn him, it would be but just to examine on what principles he grounded a judgment that is so contrary to the universal sentiments of men.

St. Austin considered things as a Christian philosopher, who well knew the illusion of the senses and passions, and of what the scripture terms *the bewitching of vanity**; he spoke accord-

* Wis. iv. 12,

ing to the maxims of the gospel, that were dictated by the Eternal Wisdom, and are confirmed by sound reason, which teach us that the great, the only affair of man is his eternal salvation; that all other affairs have no claim to this appellation but in as much as they bear a reference to that; that God has created him and placed him upon the earth but to labour to save his soul; that if he comes to lose it, had he besides gained the whole universe, all is lost to him; that, on the contrary, he gains all by saving it, though even he were to lose the universe; and therefore, from the moment he becomes capable of reflecting on and of knowing his destination, he ought to apply to accomplish it, and direct to this one point all his designs and actions, and esteem and pursue whatever leads him to his last end, and despise and reject whatever can divert him from it.

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This most undoubtedly is true and solid wisdom: this is the principle from whence we must start, the invariable rule which we must follow in all our judgments and conduct. If the matter be so, and it cannot be called in question without renouncing both faith and reason, is St. Austin blameable for styling what the world calls affairs, mere trifles and baubles of children? What are these affairs in themselves, and separated from the affair of salvation? For it is in this light that the world views them, since in order to pursue and succeed in them, men neglect and sacrifice even their salvation. Again, what are these affairs that excite all the passions, which are the source of so many cares and agitations, of so many intrigues, and of so many crimes? Whither do these affairs lead? What is obtained even when they answer our wishes? We are richer, we
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are more respected and honored, we can better gratify our passions. I do not see that the greatest success in any kind of worldly affairs leads to any thing else.

But let me ask, are we the happier? for doubtless it is happiness that is aimed at; it is to obtain it that we slave so much. Shew me then a man to whom the peaceable possession of immense riches brings as much pleasure as it cost him pains to acquire them, and as it now costs him trouble to preserve them. Shew me an avaricious man who is sated, content, free from desire and disquietude.

You have laboured to settle yourself advantageously in life; you have made this point of view your grand affair; it has engrossed your thoughts night and day for many years; at last your ambition has been satisfied: How long did this joy last? Reckon, I do not say

say years and months, but days and hours; tell me if you dare that your acquisition made you happy even for one hour, and that the first moment, when your intoxication was over, did not become to you a source of fresh cares, new projects, of new intrigues, and of fresh disgusts. Was it then worth while to torment yourself for so many years, to brave so many dangers, to waste your days and your health in so frivolous a pursuit?

Another charmed with the reputation of being a genius, labours, heats his blood, employs his nights, to give to the public a work that is to give him an illustrious name among the great writers. This is his grand affair; every thing else is nothing to him; the work makes its appearance; what disquietude about the success of it! Some judge well, others judge ill of it; some admire it, and others criticise it: a
thousand

thousand malevolent tongues censure and condemn it. For one applause that flatters, there are a thousand sarcasms that wound. The author during life enjoys but a dubious fame, and it is only when he is dead that envy ceases, and that due justice is done to him. Reputation of wit and talents, thou vain and empty bauble, enemy to the peace of him who is in pursuit of thee, and of him who attains thee, didst thou deserve to be purchased at so dear a rate?

It is useless to prolong the enumeration. All things whatsoever to which the world gives the name of an affair, are only so many thorns that cause trouble and vexation. It is only upon this account that they deserve the name of serious affairs; for in every other sense they are trifles and insignificant things, which amuse the passions, or rather which irritate them, without ever

ever being able to satisfy them. The plays of children are truly plays, they divert them for the present time, and no harm proceeds from them; but the plays of the grown up man are cruel plays, they are plays that ruin society, and are fatal to him who engages in them.

The evil that these plays bring upon man in respect to this life is nothing. The case is very different when they are considered with a reference to the life to come. In this regard the first effect that the affairs of this world produce is, that they afford no leisure to think on the affair of salvation. Other objects engross the attention, and succeed each other so closely, that there is no room left for this; from whence it happens that it is neglected and entirely lost sight of; or should the idea of it occasionally occur, it presently vanishes, makes no sort of impression, and

and is of no effect. It should seem as if it were an affair of the greatest indifference, and that the good or bad success in it were of no consequence to us. The interest which we take in our present affairs is viewed in a superior light of importance, and impresses on us the strongest sentiments of their consequence. All the passions are in motion, all the faculties of the soul are in action to bring them to a successful issue; we are persuaded that our all is at stake, and that our happiness depends upon them.

Mean while this idea of salvation becomes importune to us; it fatigues, it frets, it chagrins us; we carefully shun whatever may recall it, and if it returns in spite of us, we drive it away. It would be hurtful to our affairs; it would trouble all our pleasures, which are our greatest affair.

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It is little that they should make us forget the care of salvation; our affairs engage us into a track that is directly opposite to it, and lead us to our eternal perdition. So soon as we embrace them with a certain degree of heat, and are ardently desirous of a favourable event, it is difficult, not to say impossible, to be delicate in the choice of the means. Reason becomes blind, conscience is stifled, and religion is no longer regarded. Such a road seems to us to be the best, effectually to bring us to the point we aim at; the carefulness of our proceedings is, what is the least thought of: even when it clearly appears that the means are unlawful, we continue in our pursuit: our eyes are open to the event, but are shut to every thing else. At all events, such a one must be brought over to our schemes; this competitor must be removed, and therefore must be deceived
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and calumniated. Intrigues, falsehood, craft, perfidy and violence are all employed to effect our purpose. The chain of affairs occasions a continuance of crimes; the farther we advance, the more do we become enterprising and bold.

Death at last surprises us, whilst we are taken up with new projects, and with the iniquitous means of bringing them to bear. Thus do we step into eternity, not only without having thought of, but also without having prepared for it, after having laboured all our lives to render it miserable. Those plays of men, therefore, that are called affairs, are through their own fault, the cause and the instrument of their damnation.

But, what! can human society subsist without affairs? Or must we absolutely renounce them in order to be saved? If this renouncement were

necessary, there ought to be no hesitation: but God does not exact that of those who are engaged in the world. All he demands is, that we should rank the affair of salvation in the first place: that whilst we acquit ourselves of the others, we should not neglect this, that we should never separate them, that they should be so subordinate to this, as to make a part of it, that we should apply to them according to the order and design of God, according to the rules which God prescribes; that these affairs should be affairs of duty or of charity, and not affairs of ambition or interest, and then they will not be considered as important in themselves, but considering them in reference to salvation, they will be deemed important, or even indispensable, according to the connection they will have with this principal object. Then we shall no longer be eager for success,

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we shall only betake ourselves to ways that are allowed of and authorised. The order of society will subsist, and will flourish the more, the affairs of the world, such as our life cannot be without, will run in their proper channel, and far from being obstacles of salvation, they will lead to it as means.

V.

A child so little, and a sinner so great.

Book 1. c. 12.

IT is surprising, no doubt, to hear St. Austin qualifying himself a great sinner at the age of seven or eight years, though he only reproaches himself with the faults that are ordinary to children of that age. But we must enter into the thought of this holy doctor, who only speaks thus with regard to original sin, and the malignity

with which it has infected our nature; a malignity that shews itself from the earliest infancy, and to the effects of which, though they be not accompanied by a degree of sufficient knowledge, he gives after St. Paul the name of sin, because the concupiscence that produces them is an evil, and inclines to evil.

Let us fathom here the strange corruption of human nature; to this effect let us return back to our first years, where it shews itself, in its native and genuine state, before all reflection on our part, and independant of all deliberation and free consent. What do we see in children, even washed by baptism from the original stain, besides the bud of the passions, and the vices of their subsequent ages?

Their soul wrapt up in the darkness of a profound ignorance, is not capable of any spiritual function; it is only
sensible

sensible of natural pleasure and pain: it seems to exist but for the body, and at first has only a life that is purely animal. From hence begins the empire of the senses, the love of being well, the desire of agreeable sensations, the horror of unpleasing and painful impressions, a humiliating slavery, which the child contracts with his life; and is the source of all the sins which he one day will commit, to procure for his body its wants, its ease, and its pleasures, and which will cost him many groans, many efforts and many painful conflicts, if he ever undertakes to free himself from it. Pride, the spirit of dominion and self-love appear openly in the child, from the moment he feels himself; he directs all to himself, he will be master of every thing, and nothing must resist his will. All who are about him, seem to him to be made only to obey and serve him. All that

pleases him in the objects that present themselves to his view, he desires, all that he desires he pretends to have: it must be given to him immediately, the least refusal, the least delay irritates and provokes him to cries and tears. He loves nothing but himself, or loves nothing that bears not a reference to himself.

His jealousy is extreme if he sees another child with any thing, if another is made much of in his presence, he is jealous: to appease him he must have the same thing, and must be equally caressed. He never will like him whom he fancies to be better attended to, more noticed, or more flattered than he is. He even steps over to envy, not being able to endure that another should share with him the same sweetmeats and toys of his age. I have seen, says St. Austin, a child grow pale through envy, casting a savage eye

eye on another that was sucking with him.

A child is choleric and vindictive; if a nothing appease him, a nothing irritates him; he is but too prone to return the blows that are given him, and oftentimes he gives the first, those about laugh at it, because he cannot hurt, they even incite him and applaud him when he strikes; they strike for him, they feign that he has hurt them, and directly the joy of having revenged himself sparkles on his countenance. If his feebleness renders him impotent, it is clearly to be seen that an evil will is whole and intire in him, and it is the intention rather than the effect that is to be considered.

He soon becomes a glutton, greedy and sensual; eating without choice, without measure, without discretion, stealing to satisfy his unruly appetites, devouring with his eyes what he sees on

the table, and cries at a refusal of what might be hurtful to him: and though fatiated, he says he is hungry, that he may obtain that which he covets.

A child is lazy, is an enemy to all application and labour, and to all that restrains and confines him: still he is curious to learn, but only that which he pleases. What industry must be employed to make him attentive? What promises, what threats must not be used? He has but too much ardour to instruct himself in the amusements of his age; he soon gets acquainted with the rules, the finesses and even the cheats of them: but as to serious studies, he has them in aversion, they are his torment. If not excited by some passion, such as the love of praise, shame, emulation, hope, or fear, never will he shew either a taste or an eagerness for them. A manifest sign is this that in future, great interest will be necessary,
either

either of glory, ambition, or cupidity to force him from idleness, dissipation and his pleasures.

The candour and the openness of the first age do not last long. The child learns early to dissemble, to cheat, to lie, and to deceive those who watch over him. As soon as he has the first idea of evil, he hides himself to commit it: in the fear of corrections and punishments, he prepares excuses and untruths which he sometimes supports to the last degree of obstinacy, and carries his malice so far as to throw the blame upon others.

What shall I say of his application to study the faults and foibles of his parents, his governors and masters, in order to draw advantages from them? What keenness in his observations? What dexterity in seizing the just moment? What address in gaining, in moving, in softening, in feigning sentiments

ments which he has not, in order to persuade that he is sincere? In so tender an age what combinations, what windings, what artifices, to obtain flattery, applause and caresses; to shun constraint, contradiction and pain, in short to content his passions! What a deep malignity is there here! it is not as yet dangerous, I know, but what is wanting for it to be so, but objects of greater consequence? Neither is it as yet criminal, but it becomes so in proportion as reason unfolds itself, and as knowledge increases.

I have yet only spoken of the first age, and have not said all: for who possibly could drain this subject? But there is enough to justify the judgment which St. Austin formed of this age. The aggregate of these and of many other vices, such as levity, inconstancy, caprice, humour, stubbornness, curiosity and vanity is what renders education

tion at once so necessary and difficult; and exacts on the part of the instructor so many qualities and so many virtues, of which an union is so rare.

Let Rousseau step forth now and maintain that man is born upright, that education and society pervert him: that he needs only to be left such as he comes out of the hands of nature, without absolutely doing any thing to cultivate his mind and heart. An insane paradox, worthy of public contempt and indignation!

But if man is born upright, he must have a natural bent towards what is morally good, and a natural aversion to its contrary. From whence then proceed all those defects in children which I have been observing? Are they not all more or less subject to them? Are they not all inclined to evil? Have they not all a reluctance to what is good? Propose to them what

what is pleasing, what is flattering to their senses and the passions of their age, they all fly to it. Propose to them what is reasonable, honest and useful, they all draw back and recoil. Is this then the uprightness in which God has created man? His good and bad inclinations ought at least to be on a balance, which most certainly are not. There is in him a fund of corruption and malignity, which the Creator could not have placed in him, and which must proceed from some other cause: the ancient philosophers felt it well. They imagined various explications of it; but there is no other than the degradation of our nature by original sin, from an elevation that was not its due, it fell beneath what it ought to have been. Infancy, yes infancy is a striking proof of what revelation teaches us on this head, without this unravelling, the principle of its first vices is unaccountable. If

If we proceed to the age that immediately follows it, the demonstration will be perfect. No sooner do the organs expand to a certain degree, no sooner does reason come to some consistency, than the most violent and furious of our inclinations declares itself, takes possession of the senses and of the imagination, darkens the understanding, powerfully solicits, subdues and bears down the will of almost every individual of the human race. They are not however ignorant that the desires to which concupiscence excites them, and the actions to which it spurs them on are illicit; they have a secret shame of it, they are perfectly silent on that head, and when they yield to gratification, they carefully shun every witness; they blush, they are dumb and confounded on being detected; their conscience condemns them, and leaves no sort of excuse. What is the origin

gin of an inclination that is so strong and impetuous? Why is not man master of it? Why is not his reason sufficient to check, to rule and confine it within the proper bounds marked out by the Creator? How comes it that the fear of God's judgments, the most solid piety, all the help of religion, the most pathetic and moving exhortations of its ministers, the strongest interior graces are hardly sufficient to stem the torrent? Why do all, exclusive of some privileged souls, hit upon this rock, where the major part are wrecked, and from which others are only preserved by a particular assistance from God.

Will it still be said that man is born upright, whilst he is thus enslaved by a brutal passion that dishonors and degrades him, that withdraws him from his God, and makes him prostitute his heart to creatures? Dare any one say that

that this inclination is a natural exigency, that it is lawful and allowed of provided some certain bounds are not exceeded? What then is the sentiment of shame, and why should it be affixed to this pretended necessity, and not to the cravings of hunger and thirst? Deny then that this sentiment is innate in the youth of both sexes; deny that it is produced by reason and a moral instinct, and therefore, that it is a curb that God has put upon this passion; level man in this respect with the brute beast: or acknowledge that the object to which this sentiment affixes shame even when we are alone, has in itself something criminal, something humiliating and dishonorable to a rational being, that is formed to the image of God, and made to know, love and possess him.

Besides, I consider this inclination in its origin, and in its earliest impressions

sions which precede all reflection, all deliberation. And I say, that even in that, there intervenes a disorder, which Pagan antiquity acknowledged, and of which God could not be the author. To what else can it be attributed, but to original sin, or man's rebellion against God, which is punished in him by a rebellion of the flesh against the spirit? A rebellion which is contrary to order; for order requires that the body should be subject to the soul, as the soul should be subject to God: a rebellion at which our first parents blushed, and knew full well that it was a chastisement inflicted on their disobedience.

VI.

*Thou hast appointed, and the thing is so,
that every spirit that is not in order
should be its own torment. B. 1 c. 12.*

AS order is the principle of peace, disorder is the principle of trouble; and as peace is the source of happiness, so trouble is that of misery. Let us also add, that the perfection of every thing consists in a succession of order, and that the imperfection of it, springs from disorder. Order, therefore produces whatever is good, both in nature and morality, because peace, perfection and happiness result from it: and disorder, by the contrary reason produces whatever is bad. I shall not speak here of the evils which disorder brings on either, in nature or in civil society. No one is ignorant that we owe all the good things of nature,

to the constant order that reigns in it, and that the least derangement in its laws occasions all natural evils. The advantages which are reaped from society, are equally a fruit of political order; and the evils of states have no other source than the violation of laws and the inversion of order. I shall only speak of moral order, and only of that which concerns every individual, in reference to his duties to God.

What then is order with regard to man? And in what does it consist? In his having his reason at all times, and in all things submissive to God; and in his having his passions and his senses submissive to reason. On this, his order, his perfection, his peace, and his felicity depend. He is as perfect, as tranquil, as happy as he can be here below, as long as he deviates in nothing from the order that is marked out for him by the divine will. In proportion

tion as he steps from this order, he becomes subject to vice, peace leaves him, and his happiness deserts him.

We may consider in man two kinds of disorders: a disorder that he brings with him into the world, which is an effect of original sin; and a disorder that rises from a bad use of his free-will.

The first disorder is nothing else but the rebellion of concupiscence, which is not free in itself, and which even the saints reluctantly experienced; and, therefore, the sensation of this revolt of the flesh against the spirit, is not a sin. But because it is a disorder, it always causes a torment to the soul; it hurts its peace and its perfection; for which reason, man is commanded to resist concupiscence, to enfeeble it, and to use his utmost endeavours to extinguish it. He cannot compass this without using constant violence, with-

out being at constant war with himself, and this war is a torment to him, which makes him groan and cry out with the apostle, * *miserable man that I am, who will free me from the body of this death.* Thus is the sentence of St. Austin true, even in respect to this original disorder, that is not a sin, but the pain of sin; and God has appointed that it should be the torment and probation of all the children of Adam, in punishment of his disobedience.

But this sentence is more palpably true, and contains far more dismal consequences in regard to a soul, that renders itself culpable and recedes from order, by a bad use of its liberty. Man no sooner yields to the baneful charm of sin, than trouble ensues, his conscience takes the alarm, and keenly stings him. He is brought to the necessity of fleeing from himself, of shun-

* Rom. vii. 24.

ning every thing that brings him back to himself. But his attempts are vain; on a thousand occasions an interior voice speaks, agitates and terrifies him. In spite of himself, from time to time, he enters into himself, where he feels the worm that gnaws and tears him. Such is the condition of all sinners without exception: neither can they extricate themselves from it, but by returning to the order which they had quitted.

It is from an effect of his goodness to men, that God has established that the case should thus be; it is his will that a bitter but salutary experience should make him feel, that his happiness is attached to order, that, by swerving from it, he becomes his own enemy to a degree, as not to be able to bear with himself; and to be forced to banish himself from his own heart. This torment which he experiences, and which he

tries in vain to get rid of, is a secret admonition to him to return to God and to order. It is a resource which he has still left in his disorder. Alas! what would become of him, and how much would he not be to be pitied, if in his sin he enjoyed tranquillity and peace? His misfortune in this case would be desperate; for, by finding the false happiness he is in search of, he never would admit of a cure.

In fact, it is to this that the determined sinner aspires. He labours to extinguish in himself every ray of light, to stifle every remorse, and banish every importune idea, that he may gratify his passions in peace. And he cannot succeed. For to effect this, it is not sufficient to rise up against order, to hate it, to say in one's own heart, that there is no order, and that every thing moves by chance. It is
necessary

necessary besides, that he should convince his own mind of the truth of this, and that, in this point, his reason and his desires should perfectly agree. At this he labours in vain: in vain does he affirm that he is tranquil, that his joy is pure without any mixture of trouble. There is no peace nor happiness for him: and though he should impose upon others in this particular, he cannot deceive himself. Even in this life his crime is his tormentor, and his present anguish announces to him the eternal pain that awaits him. For he knows but too well, that his soul will never die, and that it will carry every where with it the dart that tears it. He knows it so much the more, as he has omitted nothing to persuade himself of the contrary. This renders him desperate; and yet he persists in his malice. Who would believe it! he feels that

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his sin renders him miserable; he clearly sees that this misery will follow him into eternity, and yet he will not renounce it.

It still would be something, if he could establish a kind of order amongst his passions, if he could satisfy them, or at least, by illusion, hush them into quietude. But no; and here he meets with a fresh torment that poisons even his false enjoyments. Doubly to be pitied: on account of the real peace of which he deprives himself, and on account of the illusive peace which he seeks for in vain, and which constantly flies from him. What a deplorable condition! it is however that of the greatest part of Christians. It is dreadful, it is inconceivable!

What then becomes of that innate desire of happiness? Do they renounce it? They want to find this happiness, where reason, religion and experience
tell

tell them that it is not to be found; and they will not seek it, where both natural and supernatural lights, as well as conscience teach them that it is to had. Who will explain this contradiction in man, on an object, in which his greatest and only interest is concerned? What a blindness in his mind! but what a malice in his will! For it is chiefly in the will that this disorder originates. He sees his error; he walks in a false path that ends in a precipice; he is not ignorant of it; even on his way, instead of the flowers which he was in hopes of culling, he finds but thorns. No matter, he obstinately walks on, at every step he draws nearer to the gulph: he plunges into it, and is irretrievably lost.

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into eternal misery; enemies in regard to this present life, because their remorse is a poison that kills it, and because sin itself brings to it no real advantage. I say no real advantage to the passions that are never satisfied. What is the life of a sinner, but an anticipated hell, where, because there is no order, there is neither content, calm, nor a peaceable possession of one's self, but insatiable desires, violent fears, inward trouble, and an incessant agitation.

Whosoever you may be who read this, reflect on yourself: should you be a slave to sin, are you in peace? Have you enjoyed a moment's peace since you have been under the empire of this tyrant? Can you possibly expect to enjoy any peace? Should your heart tell you no, (and who in good earnest can say otherwise) what reason then have you to love sin, and to
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live with so cruel an enemy? Mark the evil it has done you, and will continue to do you down to the grave. Think on the evil infinitely greater, which it will bring on you after death.

Do not say I have gone on too far, it is too late to draw back. It never is too late, on this side of the grave, to enter into the path of happiness; if it be true that the false allurements of sin have deceived you, if they be not what they seemed to be at first appearance, if they only have been to you a source of sorrow and affliction of spirit, henceforth renounce them, detest them, return to your God, come back to order; and from the first steps which you will take to this end, joy and peace will spring up in your soul: God has promised it; and he is not less faithful in his promises than he is in his threats. You have experienced how miserable, how painful a thing
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sions which precede all reflection, all deliberation. And I say, that even in that, there intervenes a disorder, which Pagan antiquity acknowledged, and of which God could not be the author. To what else can it be attributed, but to original sin, or man's rebellion against God, which is punished in him by a rebellion of the flesh against the spirit? A rebellion which is contrary to order; for order requires that the body should be subject to the soul, as the soul should be subject to God: a rebellion at which our first parents blushed, and knew full well that it was a chastisement inflicted on their disobedience.

VI.

*Thou hast appointed, and the thing is so,
that every spirit that is not in order
should be its own torment. B. 1 c. 12.*

AS order is the principle of peace,
disorder is the principle of trouble;
and as peace is the source of happiness,
so trouble is that of misery. Let
us also add, that the perfection of every
thing consists in a succession of order,
and that the imperfection of it, springs
from disorder. Order, therefore produces
whatever is good, both in nature
and morality, because peace, perfection
and happiness result from it: and
disorder, by the contrary reason produces
whatever is bad. I shall not
speak here of the evils which disorder
brings on either, in nature or in civil
society. No one is ignorant that
we owe all the good things of nature,

to the constant order that reigns in it, and that the least derangement in its laws occasions all natural evils. The advantages which are reaped from society, are equally a fruit of political order; and the evils of states have no other source than the violation of laws and the inversion of order. I shall only speak of moral order, and only of that which concerns every individual, in reference to his duties to God.

What then is order with regard to man? And in what does it consist? In his having his reason at all times, and in all things submissive to God; and in his having his passions and his senses submissive to reason. On this, his order, his perfection, his peace, and his felicity depend. He is as perfect, as tranquil, as happy as he can be here below, as long as he deviates in nothing from the order that is marked out for him by the divine will. In proportion

tion as he steps from this order, he becomes subject to vice, peace leaves him, and his happiness deserts him.

We may consider in man two kinds of disorders: a disorder that he brings with him into the world, which is an effect of original sin; and a disorder that rises from a bad use of his free-will.

The first disorder is nothing else but the rebellion of concupiscence, which is not free in itself, and which even the saints reluctantly experienced; and, therefore, the sensation of this revolt of the flesh against the spirit, is not a sin. But because it is a disorder, it always causes a torment to the soul; it hurts its peace and its perfection; for which reason, man is commanded to resist concupiscence, to enfeeble it, and to use his utmost endeavours to extinguish it. He cannot compass this without using constant violence, with-

out being at constant war with himself, and this war is a torment to him, which makes him groan and cry out with the apostle, * *miserable man that I am, who will free me from the body of this death.* Thus is the sentence of St. Austin true, even in respect to this original disorder, that is not a sin, but the pain of sin; and God has appointed that it should be the torment and probation of all the children of Adam, in punishment of his disobedience.

But this sentence is more palpably true, and contains far more dismal consequences in regard to a soul, that renders itself culpable and recedes from order, by a bad use of its liberty. Man no sooner yields to the baneful charm of sin, than trouble ensues, his conscience takes the alarm, and keenly stings him. He is brought to the necessity of fleeing from himself, of shun-

* - Rom. vii. 24.

ning every thing that brings him back to himself. But his attempts are vain; on a thousand occasions an interior voice speaks, agitates and terrifies him. In spite of himself, from time to time, he enters into himself, where he feels the worm that gnaws and tears him. Such is the condition of all sinners without exception: neither can they extricate themselves from it, but by returning to the order which they had quitted.

It is from an effect of his goodness to men, that God has established that the case should thus be; it is his will that a bitter but salutary experience should make him feel, that his happiness is attached to order, that, by swerving from it, he becomes his own enemy to a degree, as not to be able to bear with himself; and to be forced to banish himself from his own heart. This torment which he experiences, and which he

tries in vain to get rid of, is a secret admonition to him to return to God and to order. It is a resource which he has still left in his disorder. Alas! what would become of him, and how much would he not be to be pitied, if in his sin he enjoyed tranquillity and peace? His misfortune in this case would be desperate; for, by finding the false happiness he is in search of, he never would admit of a cure.

In fact, it is to this that the determined sinner aspires. He labours to extinguish in himself every ray of light, to stifle every remorse, and banish every importune idea, that he may gratify his passions in peace. And he cannot succeed. For to effect this, it is not sufficient to rise up against order, to hate it, to say in one's own heart, that there is no order, and that every thing moves by chance. It is
necessary

neccessary besides, that he should convince his own mind of the truth of this, and that, in this point, his reason and his desires should perfectly agree. At this he labours in vain: in vain does he affirm that he is tranquil, that his joy is pure without any mixture of trouble. There is no peace nor happiness for him: and though he should impose upon others in this particular, he cannot deceive himself. Even in this life his crime is his tormentor, and his present anguish announces to him the eternal pain that awaits him. For he knows but too well, that his soul will never die, and that it will carry every where with it the dart that tears it. He knows it so much the more, as he has omitted nothing to persuade himself of the contrary. This renders him desperate; and yet he persists in his malice. Who would believe it! he feels that

his sin renders him miserable; he clearly sees that this misery will follow him into eternity, and yet he will not renounce it.

It still would be something, if he could establish a kind of order amongst his passions, if he could satisfy them, or at least, by illusion, hush them into quietude. But no; and here he meets with a fresh torment that poisons even his false enjoyments. Doubly to be pitied: on account of the real peace of which he deprives himself, and on account of the illusive peace which he seeks for in vain, and which constantly flies from him. What a deplorable condition! it is however that of the greatest part of Christians. It is dreadful, it is inconceivable!

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tell them that it is not to be found; and they will not seek it, where both natural and supernatural lights, as well as conscience teach them that it is to had. Who will explain this contradiction in man, on an object, in which his greatest and only interest is concerned? What a blindness in his mind! but what a malice in his will! For it is chiefly in the will that this disorder originates. He sees his error; he walks in a false path that ends in a precipice; he is not ignorant of it; even on his way, instead of the flowers which he was in hopes of cul-ling, he finds but thorns. No matter, he obstinately walks on, at every step he draws nearer to the gulph: he plunges into it, and is irretrievably lost.

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it is to swerve from order, it depends upon you to experience how pleasing a thing it is to return to, and persevere in it.

VII.

Who should be more pitied than he who is wretched, and pities not himself?

B. 1. c. 13.

THE world is full of this set of unhappy beings, who pity not themselves, either because they feel not their misery, or affect not to feel it. I do not speak of temporal evils; these are felt too sensibly; men are too apt to complain of them, even so as to importune those in whom they place a confidence, or to whom they apply for relief. And if, through pride, they conceal their misfortune from others, this, silence is proportionably painful, as it leaves

leaves them destitute of all hope of assistance.

The evils of this life sting us too sensibly not to be affected by them, or not to complain of them. We even judge that those deserve the most compassion in their misfortunes, who either from age or want of reflection, have no sense of their unhappiness. Poor child, do we daily say, how much is he to be pitied ! He feels not his misfortune. And with reason ; because the sense of the evil leads us to a desire of mitigation, and of using every means to procure it ; whereas they who feel it not, do nothing to be freed from it, and thus remain objects of the charity of others.

The evils of which I speak, and which St. Austin has in view. are those of the soul. Whosoever feels them, and dreads the consequences of them, is doubtless to be pitied ; but much less

less so than he who feels them not, or feigns not to feel them. Sin, in general produces these two baneful effects.

In youth, in the heat of passions, in the intoxication of pleasures that are pursued in a maze of a continued dissipation, the sinner sets at a great distance the truths of religion, and the eternal torments with which it threatens him: he makes it a rule to avoid whatever can bring on the thought of them, because it would disturb him in the enjoyment of his pleasures. Thus does he place his present happiness in not thinking on his future misery, which is inevitable.

As to what relates to the actual state of the sinner, to the torment occasioned by his passions, to the hunger by which he is devoured, to the disgust that saddens him, to the fears that molest him, to the cares that corrode him,

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as all this is intermixed with flattering hopes, agreeable recollections, with real or imaginary pleasures, and as what is passed or what is to come, weakens the painful sense of the present, he cannot think himself miserable. He sees these various clouds following each other in succession, without any reflection; he is only attentive to the clear and serene intervals which he sees, or thinks he sees between them. Besides, he has not the possession of himself. Made over to sensible objects, he is only affected by the impression which they make upon him: not unlike a child, or a man intoxicated with liquor, who have only direct sensations and ideas. Thus, though his situation be truly miserable, he feels it not.

Those who feel their evils, and affect not to feel them, are the unbelievers by profession, who boldly step forth
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and avowedly declare that they have shaken off the yoke of religion; who speak, who write of it as being persuaded of its imposture, who boast of being divested of all fear of futurity, and vaunt that they live in peace, under the influence of their passions. In this they mean to pass for men of strong parts, of great knowledge, and great power of reasoning; for men who have got over all vulgar prejudices. But it is all imposition: for they are no less tormented than others; they have even a torment that is peculiar to them: which is, that of being constantly in conflict with the religion which they have renounced, of being unrelentingly haunted by its evidence, and of being frozen with fear by its most alarming and dreadful truths. In vain do they accumulate doubts upon doubts, objections upon objections, and applaud themselves for their pretended

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ed demonstrations. Even when they succeed in the seduction of others, they cannot reach to the deception of themselves.

The proof that they are miserable, let them say what they will, is taken from their being sad, sorrowful, humourfome, whimsical, splenetic, violent, passionate in a degree that amounts to fury, even in their wrtings, insupportable to others as well as to themselves; or at least they are entrenched in a cold indifference, in a simulated apathy, and in a haughty disdain; unsusceptible of joy but when their vanity is flattered, and when their impious projects are followed with success.

As it hardly happens, but at a certain age, that men betake themselves to irreligious systems, when the great heat of passions is abated, and when, to effect their purpose, a more reflexed cast of mind is requisite, in appear-

ance, unbelievers are commonly grave, tranquil, and phlegmatic; and are tolerably masters of their exterior: and, by this ostentation, they deceive those who know not what they experience within. But, on the other hand, as most of them are battered and exhausted on the article of pleasures, relishing them no longer, and taking to them but from habit, they no longer feel those false delights that transport youthful years; their senses are blunted, their imagination is frigid; they are disgusted, they are tired, and are no more in a state to form to themselves an illusion on enjoyments, the whole emptiness of which they are sensibly acquainted with.

That the misery of the one and the other set is real, is what we easily can be convinced of. It does appertain neither to the senses, or to the imagination, or to the passions, much less to
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a desolating impiety, to judge of the happiness or of the misery of an intelligent being. This judgment belongs only to a sound reason, and to a pure heart that possesses itself in peace.

Now what do these judges pronounce? They decide that the rage of the fever which deprives a sick man of the knowledge and the reflexed sensation of his evil, does not deprive him of the reality of the evil, and that it is to him a new evil that is added to the former; that the joy of a delirious man is not a true joy. So much for the first set of men.

They decide that the irreligion that bereaves itself of all hope of happiness in the other life; that has no other perspective than annihilation, renders insipid, and poisons the pleasures of the present life; a life so much the more miserable, as it is from cool deliberation, from reflection, from system,

tem, having only for its support an insane pride that constrains it to put on a good countenance, amidst interior vexations by which it is devoured. So much for the second set.

In fine they decide, that those of the first set are much more to be pitied than if they felt their evil, because they would desire a cure, and look out for a remedy: nevertheless that their case is not entirely desperate, because an occasional reflection on themselves may bring them to a sense of their situation; but that the second, who feel their evil, and will not acknowledge it, are incomparably more worthy of compassion; because to the evils which they experience, they add obstinacy in rejecting every remedy, and a despair of ever altering their desolating condition.

VIII.

This turpitude does not help to the learning of these words, but these words cause a commission of this turpitude with more boldness. B. 1. c. 16.

ST. AUSTIN makes this reflection on account of a passage in Terence, in which a young man, from the authority of the example of Jupiter, attempts to justify the licentiousness of his life; and on this occasion the saint greatly blames those who explained to youth the profane authors without any precaution, alledging for motive that they learned to speak well, and to become eloquent. It is with great reason that the zeal of this holy doctor is inflamed against the abuse of putting into the hand of young people those dangerous works; as if they could not

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draw from other sources pure language and eloquence.

It is astonishing that the same abuse should still subsist to this day in Christendom. Not but that for near a century past, some measures have been taken to obviate the abuse; but the attention on this head has not been carried so far as the object deserves. This is what engages me to explain myself here on so interesting a matter. I shall only glance at the substance of it, for it would require a whole volume to treat on it fully.

Our education is quite Pagan. In colleges and in the inclosure of houses, children are hardly made to read any author, besides profane poets, orators, and historians. They are impressed with the highest idea of them; they are presented with them as the most perfect models in the art of writing, as the brightest geniuses, and as our masters.

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In a word, nothing is neglected to make them feel the beauties of them, to imprint them in their memory, and to teach them to imitate them. In order to facilitate the intelligence of them, they are led far on into a detail of the genealogies, and the adventures of the gods, and of the heroes of mythology; they are transported to Athens, and into ancient Rome; they are made acquainted with the manners, the customs, the religion of ancient people; they are initiated, as I may say, into all the mysteries, all the systems, and all the absurdities of Paganism. All this is the object of an infinity of notes and commentaries, which the learned have composed on every author.

That such was the education in the four first ages of the church, is not to be wondered at, nor could it be otherwise. Those who kept public schools, whether grammarians, or rhetorici-

ans, were Pagans. The children of Christians frequented those schools along with the others; the ministers of the church, who groaned under this necessity, spared no pains to preserve them from all danger. Those profane sciences had also, at that time, their utility. Idolatry prevailed in the empire down to Constantine, the christians were in daily disputes with the heathens, they stood in need of being acquainted with their principles, their worship, their extravagance, even the obscenities of their fables, the chief tracts of their history, and with the different systems of their philosophy. The bishops particularly, who were incessantly attacking them, both by word of mouth and by writing, and who were applying themselves to dissipate their darkness, could not be without this knowledge; and we see in the works of the fathers, the wonderful

derful use they made of it, to bring them back to the great principles of the natural law, and to enhance Christianity from its comparison with the ridiculous impiety of polytheism.

But now, and since many centuries, what need is there that we should be so much versed in the fabulous history, in the intelligence of poets, and of other authors of antiquity? What great advantage is it, or can it be in future to children? And why is it made the principal point of their education?

Idolatry was not yet entirely extinct, when the inundations of barbarians came on, and sunk the Roman empire in the West. With it, education fell; ignorance spread itself every where; the Latin tongue degenerated into diverse jargons, from whence spring our modern languages; people were no longer in a way to understand the

authors

authors who had spoken it purely: and understood still less of the Greek?

It was only after the taking of Constantinople, about the middle of the fifteenth century, that studies began to rise again. And the Christians became more than ever enthusiastical admirers of the ancients. The point was carried, if I dare say so, to a kind of a religious worship. The writers wrote only in Greek and Latin: they affected to make use of no other expressions, than those of the best authors, to such a degree, that cardinal Bembo wrote to Leo X. *give thanks to the gods, for their having created you pontif.* It was carrying Paganism as far as it could go. Then, therefore, at first in Italy, and afterwards in other parts of Europe, the schools were reformed, and a new plan of education was adopted. Every one sees, without my telling it, that

that every thing was given to profane antiquity.

This plan, no doubt, has had very great advantages, I do not disown it, and the church in the first place has much profited by it. But it also has been, and continues to be attended with inconveniencies, which I cannot dispense myself from exposing.

In the first place, it weakens the spirit of piety in the minds of children. I know not what a confused mixture forms itself in their head, of the truths of Christianity, and of the absurdities of mythology; of the true miracles of our religion, and the ridiculous wonders related by the poets: especially of the morality of the gospel, and of the mere human, and mere sensual morality of the heathens. We do not sufficiently reflect on the consequence of the impressions, which are made on the tender brain of children.

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But I have not a doubt, but that the reading of the ancients, whether poets, or philosophers, has contributed to form that great number of unbelievers who have made their appearance, since the revival of letters. The fictitious wonders of the poets, have taught them to doubt of the miraculous facts of scripture, and to rank them both in the same line; the sects of ancient philosophy, which at first were espoused with ardour, and of which they would follow the principles, rendered also doubtful the faith of our mysteries; which would not have happened, if youth had not been pre-occupied with a servile admiration of the great names of Plato, of Aristotle, and of others.

This education also accustoms children to feed upon agreeable fictions and lies. It nourishes and fortifies that part of the soul, that adheres to appearance,

appearance, and appearance is an enemy to truth. From hence springs that greedy eagerness for theatrical representations, for stories, for adventures and romances, for whatever is pleasing to the senses, to the imagination and to the passions. From hence also originates a levity, a frivolous turn of mind, an aversion to serious studies, a deficiency of good sense, and of solid philosophy.

The majesty, the number and the harmony of style, the choice of expressions, the art and the variety of figures, in a word, the pomp of elocution, which is vaunted to children, with so much emphasis, and often to an excess in the ancients, and who are proposed to them for imitation in their compositions, give them a disgust to the noble and sublime simplicity of the holy books. The manner of scripture appears to them to be flat and low
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in comparifon to a Cicero, a Saluft, a Titus Livius; and though the ftyle of the facred authors be infinitely fuperior to the beauties and the rules of art, they defpife them, and cannot fubmit to the reading of them; and this efrangement often continues for life. What could I not fay here of the ridiculous difdain, which fome certain puritan latinifts have affected for our vulgate?

It is alfo in colleges, that children take a relifh for paffionate and obfcene books, which are in every refpect dangerous to morals. For fuch are moft of the profane poets. I do not even except Terence, and Virgil himfelf: as to Plautus, Horace, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, Martial and Juvenal, they teem with filth, and breathe nothing but voluptuoufnefs. Would to God that thefe authors, who are deemed to be neceffary for the
knowledge

knowledge of Latin, and for the perfection of taste, had never existed, or that they had never reached down to us! What should we have lost by it? And how great a gain would it have been to good morals? It is from the lecture of these poets, that the hidden bud of corruption in children unfolds itself, that they learn evil, and lose the shame of committing it; from observing that love, even the most gross and brutal, has been the darling passion of those great geniuses, whom they are taught to admire, and that they had consecrated their talents to the singing of it.

I know that they have been corrected for the use of colleges. But in the first place Virgil has not been touched. Virgil, whose Eclogues, and the fourth book of the Eneid are so passionate. Neither are the Metamorphoses of Ovid or Terence, entirely

tirely free from what is pernicious to morals. In the second place, children, whose curiosity on this head is extreme, are not ignorant that these authors have been corrected, they know how to come at entire copies: they communicate them to each other, and the places which they read with the most avidity, which they apply the most to understand, which they retain the best, are those which have been retrenched. These corrupted sources, inspire them with a passion for bad books; and presently they seek with eagerness, in ancient and modern languages, whatever can entertain this baneful curiosity.

This is but the commencement of the evil. This taste for Paganism, contracted in a public or private education, spreads itself in course throughout society, under the favour of arts and sciences.. In fact, is it not a maxim,

maxim, that no one can succeed in the principal kinds of poetry, without borrowing from profane fable or history, the fictions, the ornaments and even the subjects? Do we not find every where in our poets, Apollo and the Muses, Venus, Love and the graces, Jupiter and his mistresses; Bacchus and his revels; all the divinities of heaven, earth, seas, and hell? I say as much of heroes and heroines. An ancient Greek, an ancient Roman, who should assist at most of our tragedies, would he think himself expatriated? Would he not see with surprise in our operas, which are composed for Christians, to divert other Christians, all the adventures of his gods, of his heroes, the apparitions, the metamorphoses, the magic, the enchantments, and all the wonders of mythology? Would he not be still more astonished at the tender sentiments, the lustful

maxims, the effeminate songs, that they are made to sing, and at that Epicurean morality, which the heathens themselves would not suffer on their stage?

Step into the apartments of the great, their galleries, their gardens, their cabinets of curiosities; what do most part of their pictures, statues and stamps represent, but subjects and personages borrowed from profane antiquity? Thus poets, painters, sculptors, and engravers, to accommodate themselves to this taste, that was taken up in the first education, are obliged to study all that appertains to mythology, the history, the religion of heathens, and must copy their dresses and their customs.

Women even who wish to read, who wish to assist at public exhibitions, and wish to be acquainted with the productions of the liberal arts, learn from their

their youth poetical history, and the principal traits of the Greek and Roman history. This, now a days, makes an essential part of their education. For them the ancient authors have been translated, even the most dangerous; for their use, dictionaries, abridgments, and other books have been composed, that they also might become as heathenish as the men.

Paganism has infected all our literature. The geniuses of every kind, the learned, the antiquarians, the lovers of letters seized with a foolish passion for the ancients, pass their life in reading them, in elucidating them, and in imitating them; they only think and write after them. Moralists draw their ideas and maxims from a Plutarch or a Seneca. If they are to produce traits of magnanimity and examples of virtue, it is Sparta or Rome; it is among the Heathens where they go to find them.

In their writings no mention is made either of our religion, whose mysteries are so sublime, the morality so pure, the promises so comforting, the threats so terrible; or of our martyrs and saints, or of the great men in every kind which Christianity has formed; or of that divine philosophy which they have not only taught but practised; or of the examples which they have left us of a virtue as solid as it is heroic. All the writings that treat of these matters they style them books of devotion, and the literati by profession, even Christians in other respects, even consecrated by their state of life to the sacred ministry, all, almost, have an aversion to and a contempt for these sort of books: so far has heathenish philosophy made progress in their soul! They will read with delight Epictetus and Antoninus, but they cannot read the imitation of Jesus Christ. A Socrates,

crates, an Aristides, a Phocion transports them with admiration; they know to the smallest particularity of their life; and they are all indifference to our Pauls, our Anthonies, our Pacomiuses, of whom they hardly know the names. Worthy fruits of a heathenish education!

Now the case is, that these literati, either by their writings or their discourses, are they who give the ton to the age they live in, who preside over the judgments and the opinions of men, and form the manners of the public. And what has been the consequence? We are not idolaters, it is true; but we are only Christians in the exterior, (if the greatest part of men of letters be even that now); and at bottom we are true Heathens as to mind, heart and conduct.

The reason which has always been the most held out to authorise this

plan of education, notwithstanding its baneful effects, and of which the consequences are not sufficiently considered, is because it is only in the ancients that we can find a just taste, a true eloquence, and a good style in every kind of writing: it is because they have invented and carried the liberal arts to the highest degree of perfection, and because we cannot form ourselves but at their school.

It is added, in regard to the poets, that it is necessary to put into the hands of young people books that will amuse them, that will rouse their imagination, and that will attract them; that a morality of pure reason would be dry, insipid and disgusting to them; that it pleases them more, and insinuates itself better into their soul through favour of fiction and of the graces of poetry.

To

To begin with this last point, I allow that if the morality of poets, and of the ancients in general; were always solid, and grounded on true principles; if it brought all to God, and to the last end of man; if it inspired a horror of vices, of those particularly that are the most agreeable; in short, if it taught the natural law in all its purity; they would have rendered youth a very great service in presenting it with their maxims dressed with all the charms of elocution. But is it so? What a dreadful detail offers itself to my memory? and what could I not say of authors even the most grave and the most respected! I appeal to the wits that are versed in antiquity.

It would therefore be necessary above all to make a choice, and extract from the most celebrated writers, whether poets, orators, historians or philosophers, the most interesting pieces,

and the most proper to bring the intended object to bear. It would also be well to put under the eyes of children the places that plainly shew the pride, the ambition, the foolish vanity, in short, the defects, the foibles of those so much boasted men: for it seems to me a point of the greatest importance to cry down the Heathens, whether in the line of mental lights, or in that of virtue. I am persuaded that such extracts, done with taste and judgment, proportioned as to matter and style, to the age and capacity of children, accompanied with the reflections and observations of an able and wise master, would be more useful to them, than the authors which are explained to them in full.

As to fine language and eloquence itself, which is so much insisted upon, is it then a thing so important, that the innocence of tender age should be sacrificed

crificed to it, and that all the inconveniencies I have been speaking of, should be passed over unregarded? Cannot we form ourselves, adorn even the mind, without filling it with heathenish fables, and without exposing the heart to an evident danger of corruption? In any author whatever, is the choice of terms, the elegant turn, the number of periods, and the beauty of figures that we should principally stop at and attend to? From the language of Grammarians, would not one be apt to think, that Homer, Demosthenes, Cicero and Virgil were only estimable on this account? Is it not rather to the substance of things to which we should pay attention, to the solidity of thought, the justness of reasoning, the elevation of sentiment, the grandeur and vivacity of the images, the truth of the descriptions, to all that can give the mind the most expansion, to all that ennobles, warms and rules the

imagination, that nourishes good sense, and teaches us to see the objects such as they are, and to form a right judgment of them? One of the greatest abuses which reign in the world, and which even influence the wise, is, that the style of literary productions makes the principal merit of them; and that the authors who express best the passions, who paint with the most force, who have the most brilliant colouring of imagination, though they are faulty in reason and judgment, are the most esteemed, and the most graciously received. What then becomes of the grand principle of Horace, that good sense is the basis and the source of art and of writing well? Thus it is that we run after the wit, the expression and the beauty of style, and are heedless of things.

Is it not this false prejudice that has made, in this very age, the prodigious repu-

reputation of two writers? The one most frivolous and superficial; the other excentric, haughty, and dealing in paradoxes even to extravagance: both false, captious, fertile in bad definitions, in sophisms, in contradictions; without order, without method, without coherence in their ideas; but speaking both the one and the other their language with purity, with an elegant and natural turn: this is full of ingenious sallies and contrasts, of nice delicate pleasantries and soft graces; the other is full of fire, force, energy, of an eloquence that seizes you at once, and torrent-like, rapidly bears you down: neither the one or the other leave to a common reader the liberty to examine, to discuss, to compare their thoughts, to see if they be true, just, and consequential. The one amuses and diverts you, the other ravishes and transports: they both enchant,

chant, and in the intoxication of this enchantment, make you swallow the poison of irreligion and libertinism. By a misfortune perhaps irreparable, the Frenchman as well as the stranger have been infatuated with these two authors, and thinking at first that they only studied the beauty of their language, have suffered themselves to be seduced both in mind and heart. Such is the woeful effect of the prejudice which is instilled into the mind of youth, that a book is excellent, if it be well written.

But what! it will be said, do you mean to snatch from the hands of youth all profane authors! and what will you substitute in lieu of them? I have no such thought. I know that there is nothing to replace them that is so useful for the intended purpose. But if so, will a reply be made, what remedy will you suggest to obviate and remove the inconveniencies of the present

mode of education? it would be too long a task to point it out. Were I to undertake it, I would not confine myself to the first instruction of children, but I would extend the reform to the schools of philosophy and divinity. These two sciences that are so beautiful, so sublime, so extensive, so indispensably necessary, are they properly taught either as to substance or as to form? Are they held in due estimation? Are they methodically treated? Do young men leave those schools, I do not say more philosophers and divines, but at least with a disposition of becoming such? I here open a vast field for many reflections.

And to whom could I propose this general plan of reformation? It could only be to a set of men, engaged by their state of life, in public instruction, capable of entering into my views, and full of zeal to accomplish them; and to a set

a set of men, who being penetrated with the spirit of religion, acting through principle of conscience, with pure, noble, disinterested views, composed of chosen members of talents, and so regulated in constitution as to have free scope to cultivate them; a set of men of which the interior policy should be directed to this grand object of education, whose members, being well brought up themselves, should devote themselves to this end from the motive of their eternal salvation, and of their perfection, who should renounce the world and all its pretensions, and to succeed the better, should, by solemn engagements, be under the inspection of wise, experienced and vigilant superiors, who should have over them full authority, both as to their personal conduct, and the maintaining of order, and correcting abuses.

IX.

I willingly learnt these things, and, wretch that I was, I took pleasure in them, and on this account they called me a youth of great hope. Book 1. c. 16.

THUS thought Austin bishop, in the maturity of reason, guided by the maxims of the gospel, and by an interior light: thus, I say, did he think of the relish he had had in his youth for Terence and Virgil, and of the judgment which men formed of him on this account. He does not hesitate to call himself a wretch, for having been so passionate for comedies and fabulous tales, and for having wept over the death of Dido; and he equally pities those who from thence, draw favourable omens, and conceived the most flattering hopes of him.

In fact, from whence sprang in him this attraction for poets, who were so dexterous in painting of love, in expressing the quickest sensations of it, and in describing the most affecting circumstances of it, but from a rising concupiscence, from the first sparks of the passions, and from that dismal corruption of the human heart, which original sin has brought on. Had he not therefore reason, after that God had converted him, to deplore this fatal inclination, and to condemn the pleasure he had taken in those lectures, as well as the tears of tenderness they had caused him to shed?

As to the great hopes which his parents and masters had conceived of his talents, they rested them on a very ruinous foundation. What was the result? From the age of sixteen, the sensibility of his heart engaged him into that same passion, the portrait of which

which had been his delight, and the penetration, the vivacity, the curiosity of his mind, which, in the research of truth, had no other guide but itself, plunged him into the extravagant impieties of Manes, into the no less impious vanity of astrology, and into the absolute uncertainty of the academicians. This was the condition of this hopeful youth to the age of thirty.

How much are men deceived in the judgments which they form of tender age! They observe in a youth memory, sagacity, imagination and sentiment. Upon this they build most sanguine hopes; they form in their mind most beautiful projects; they already behold, on a future day, this child raised to distinguished stations, they early prepare him to fill them, and to do honour, one day, to their family. How uncertain in every sense

are their views, and how liable to error; a thousand examples prove this daily. But besides how narrow, how contracted they are! How much greater are the views of God, which he would manifest, if his providence were not contradicted!

Austin was destined to teach eloquence: he practised this profession at Carthage, Rome, and Milan, the great theatres for talents. By this he expected to forward himself. How far would he have gone? We know not. But probably he would have acted no very distinguished part during his life, and neither his reputation, nor even his name would have reached posterity.

But God, who had quite other designs upon him, changes his interior dispositions, inspires him with an absolute renouncement to the world and its vanities, attaches him totally to himself,

self, takes possession of his mind and heart, and consecrates his talents to a much nobler use. He forms him the brightest luminary of the church, the oracle of his age, the master and doctor of the ages to come, the genius by excellence amongst the geniuses, the copious and inexhaustible source of the best philosophical and theological knowledge, the scourge of all errors, and the arsenal for all the defenders of the faith. He forms him one of the holiest of bishops, a model of charity, of humility, of zeal, of wisdom, of meekness, and, to say all in one word, a miracle of grace, and under this double aspect he procures to him, during his life and after his death, not barely the consideration and the reputation, but the admiration, the veneration of the whole Christian world. I say nothing of what he has done, of what he will do for him on the day

of judgment, and in the eternal mansions of glory. That which was expected of him, when he was called a child of great expectation, did it reach so far? Did it even draw near it? The heathens themselves, would they have had for the rhetorician, that respect which they expressed for the bishop?

But while men were praising him, encouraging him, and swelling his heart with pride, God was laying in his manner and in secret the foundations of the future glory of his servant. He was inspiring the pious Monica to pray for him, and to commend him to him, to shed incessant tears for the salvation of his soul: he granted her more than she asked, or could have presumed to hope for.

Let us reflect here for a moment, did St. Austin lose any thing, even according to the notions of the world,

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by leaving it to God, to dispose both of himself and of his talents? And did he not gain every thing in respect to eternity? Parents who cherish your children, who form most ardent wishes for their temporal prosperity, who spare no pains to bring them up well, to usher them into, and forward them in life; you are ignorant of the designs that God has upon them, he certainly has in view the rendering them for ever happy, and this is the essential. Possibly also he proposes to himself to give them in the world, either by their sanctity, or by their doctrine, a lustre much more solid and lasting than that which you ambition for them. Consult him therefore above all things on the lot of these cherished children; rely upon him for the issue of it. Restrain in nothing the dispositions of his amiable providence. Let your first care be to pray much

for them, to do good works for their intention. Engage them themselves to listen to God in the secret of their heart, and to be docile to his call. Should they follow it, they may not perhaps fulfil your worldly hopes, but they will answer the views of God; they may not possibly be great in the world, but they will enjoy all the happiness that can be tasted in it, with a certainty of being happy and glorified in heaven.

X.

By a law that is unrelenting, God spreads a blindness of punishment on unlawful desires. Book 1. c. 18.

MA N was created at first with an upright heart, and an enlightened mind. He was acquainted with order, and with moral good, and he liked it; but

but he liked it as a creature essentially imperfect and defective. The illicit desire entered his heart, and notwithstanding the lights of his mind, he consented to it; and this consent was punished by God, not by a total subtraction, but a considerable diminution of those lights.

From hence proceeds that blindness in which we are all born: a blindness that leaves us but a feeble, obscure, and uncertain knowledge of God, of our own nature, of our destination, of our duties; a blindness that renders us subjects to our senses, and to all their illusions, that inclines us to admit of no reality, in objects which do not affect the soul by means of corporal organs; that makes those efforts so painful, by which we endeavour to raise ourselves to spiritual things, that does not permit us stop for any length of time to consider them, and that

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presently plunges us again into matter; a blindness which is never better felt than when we apply, by means of our reason alone to the search of truth. So great is the mixture of clouds, of confusion, of doubts, of uncertainties, of ignorance, and of errors in all the knowledge we can acquire!

The ancient philosophers felt, and complained of this blindness. *We do not know any thing by its cause*, says Democritus, *truth is hidden in some dark and obscure recesses*. *We are subject*, says Cicero, *to I know not what error, and to a deplorable ignorance of truth*. Such has been to all men the first pain of the sin of their common Father. Revelation alone unveils the cause of this great and universal evil, of this evil, which brought on mankind, until the coming of Jesus Christ, such baneful consequences.

But

But besides this blindness, which is common to all men, there is another that is proper and personal to us, which is by far more dangerous and pernicious, and of which the ordinary effect is, final impenitence and eternal damnation. I here purpose to explain, in few words, the origin, the progress, the consequences of it, and to enforce the truth of it by striking examples.

The origin of this blindness is in our passions. The first effect that immediately proceeds from the bare impression of them, and from the sensation either of pleasure, or of pain that accompanies it, even before any consent of the will, is, to spread over the soul a kind of a cloud, to remove out of sight, for the moment, the first principles which should be the rule of its conduct, of its good intentions and resolutions, and wholly to occupy
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it with the object that then affects it, and with the sensation which the object excites in it. It is a kind of a charm that suspends its operations, that darkens its lights, that powerfully draws its will, and prepares chains to fetter it.

When once the soul has given itself up to this enchantment, it no longer examines whether what it wills, be permitted or not; whether God will, or will not be offended by it, whether or no bad consequences, not only for time, but for eternity, will result from it. Passion stuns and blinds it to all this: the will is enflamed, gratification is the only thing thought of, there is no longer a deliberation even on the choice of the means; hence sometimes it proceeds to the utmost extremities.

This kind of blindness, which at first is not free, and only becomes culpable

pable when we yield to the violence of the passion, is followed by a second which is entirely voluntary and of pure malice. This blindness, through dint of habit, and through a will enslaved by sin, makes every effort to force the understanding to a justification of it. Whatever pleases us, we strongly wish to think it lawful; from hence spring so many subtleties to elude the law, to interpret it in favour of our passions, and even to annul it. We are unwilling to be guilty, because we are unwilling to be punished. This blindness goes so far as to approve of in ourselves, what we readily condemn in others. If we cannot effect a clear justification of our conduct, we at least seek for means to excuse it. We alledge our constitution, the inevitable dangers of occasions, the seduction of bad counsels, the power of example, the influence

fluence of prevailing maxims and customs: we say that we were hardly our own masters, that we were taken unawares, that we were dragged along and were captivated: in short, we throw the fault on every thing but ourselves, and often on God himself: Why did he form me as I am? Why did he give me an imagination so lively, so frail a will, a disposition so pliable? Thus do we hush ourselves asleep into a habit of sin, and silence an importune reason that condemns us, and a troublesome conscience that stands up against us.

This voluntary blindness brings closely on a third which is a blindness of punishment; those who are of this class obstinately shut their eyes to the light around them, and this light, which comes from God, gradually grows weaker, insensibly withdraws itself and finally disappears. They stifle
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all cries of conscience, and God ceases to rouse and alarm it with his secret admonitions; they dispel all reflection on themselves, and presently no reflection occurs. God, in indignation for the contempt of his inspirations, totally withholds them, and abandons their untoward and perverted reason to all its false principles, reasonings and systems, and delivers it over to all the extravagances of which it is susceptible.

Such is the source of the baneful security that a sinner enjoys, after having long struggled with the lights of his reason and his faith. He applauds himself for it, as if he had gained a victory; and congratulates himself for being able to follow his inclinations with freedom. And because God no longer molests him, because religion terrifies him no longer, because his conscience is dumb, he thinks that he

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has nothing to fear, and that he is secure of impunity. At least he lives without thought of his danger; he boldly advances towards the precipice; he stands on the brink of it, without perceiving it; he finally falls into it, and his eyes only open when his misery is irremediable.

This blindness takes its rise from the corruption of the heart: the corruption of the mind closely comes after it. The sinner at first loses his morals, and then his faith. He no longer practises religion: doubts come on, he listens to them: he reads books calculated to strengthen them; he goes over to a false persuasion: the most striking proofs have no effect to convince him, and the most frivolous objections he takes for demonstrations. Revelation appears to him not only chimerical, but he even shakes the very first principles, and becomes a Deist,

Deist, an Atheist, a Materialist. After having perverted himself, his study is to pervert others. He looks with pity on those who believe; he rails at them; insinuations, disputes, writings, are all employed to seduce them; and he is at the height of joy upon his success.

Examples of such a blindness are but too common. As many sinners as are obdurate, so many there are who are thus struck blind by the hand of God. Observe them; they are only taken up with their pleasures, their interests, and their ambition. Concentrated in the things of the earth, those of heaven are nothing to them: they do not think of them, they are in no pain about them, they even laugh at them. Their eyes are shut to God, to his worship, to his commandments, to his promises, to his threats. When will they open them?

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Some perhaps at their death, but too late; others will pass from this life into eternity in a dreadful despair, or in an insensibility not less dreadful.

These visible chastisements from heaven are daily renewed. We constantly hear of libertines and unbelievers who died suddenly, without giving any sign of conversion. Some of these deaths have been accompanied with the most sensible, and the most terrible marks of reprobation. This, however, makes no impression; the living have no thought that the like misfortune threatens them, that it will be their turn to-morrow; or if they expect it, they are not moved at it. Amidst the lights of Christianity, what more visible a stamp can there be of blindness and of a divine punishment.

Do we wish to see examples of this, not only among particulars, but even
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in whole nations? Let us cast our eyes on the Jews, who have been blind and obdurate for so many ages. Can we question that the interiour disposition of that set of people is a punishment, since God had so often foretold it, both in the old and new testament?

Let us cast our eyes on so many heresies, that have sprung up since the beginning of the church, and that have brought ruin upon so many souls. Let us pay particular attention to the heresy of Luther and of Calvin, that has separated from the church almost half Europe. Let us observe if the monstrous tenets of this heresy, if the innumerable sects into which it is divided, if Socinianism, if irreligion in which it has finally ended, be not a manifest punishment of God, who has spread over these sectaries a spirit of blindness and inconsistency: indepen-

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dantly of this, how could a proud, ungovernable monk effect so strange a revolution? Let us cast our eyes on the progress that has been made for this half century past in France and elsewhere, by a philosophy, which is destruction at once of religion and morality. To what does it owe its progress? Is it to the blasphemous pleasantries of a Voltaire, to the disgusting paradoxes of a Rousseau, or to the calumniating imputations of so many other writers, whose daring impiety chiefly constitutes their merit? No: their writings alone could not have produced such a seduction, and such an inversion of principles. There is an universal blindness spread over peoples minds, and this blindness is the punishment of a prevailing libertinism, of a want of piety, of a dangerous curiosity, and of a foolish presumption. A small degree of reflection

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on the order of providence, which reigns since a certain period, over the events which God either wills or permits, is sufficient to bring on a conviction, that he chastises men by leaving them to themselves, and that by depriving them of his light, which they either reject or abuse, he suffers them to plunge into a worse darkness, than that of ancient idolatry. Also it is true, that the human malice is greater in these days than it ever has been, the corruption has taken deeper root, and the forgetfulness or contempt of principles more universally prevails.

You, who may view yourself in this description, should a ray of light still twinkle on your mind, make use of it to see your dreadful situation. Reflect that the blindness you are in, is the most terrible vengeance of an angry God, a presage almost infallible

of your reprobation, and a strong motive to fear, lest your sentence should be already pronounced. As long as this ray affects the eye of the sinner, and in a degree of evidence sets his crime before him, there is still some hope for a recovery, though he should affect not to see it. But as soon as truth withdraws itself, as soon as his conscience is silent; he has no farther resource: because he can find none in himself, and God offers him none any more. *His foolish heart is darkened.* * His understanding is buried in darkness: he no longer sees, he no longer hears, he feels no longer, he is dead to grace, and in some sense, *is gone down alive into hell.* †

If this hardness of heart has not reached to its height, the only remedy left is to discover it, to consider with

* Rom. i. 21. † Psalm liv.

fright the consequences of it, and stop short on the brink of the precipice; then to have recourse to God, and entreat him to restore light to the soul, to pardon us for having despised his truth, and to vouchsafe to cause it to shine once more on our mind. We then must make a good use of this first glimpse, we must quickly draw back, we must step from the paths of iniquity, and betake ourselves to those of justice. The thing is difficult, and it seldom happens: but nothing is impossible to God; and as long as the blindness is not complete, there is still a hope of recovery. And as we are never to presume that it is complete upon earth, the despair that casts us into final impenitence, in itself, is never free from guilt.

XI.

Thou hast reassembled me, dispersed as I was, and as it were torn to pieces, whilst withdrawing myself from thy unity, I lost myself in the multiplicity.

Book 2. c. 1.

HOW BEAUTIFUL is this image, and at once how natural, how profound, how extensive is the thought! It wonderfully expresses the dissipation, the distraction that tosses to and fro the affections of man, when he gives himself up to creatures; and the reunion, the consentering of these same affections when he adheres to God. The first state is the source of all his agitations, of his inconstancy, of his weakness, of his misery. The second is the origin of his rest, of his stability, of his strength and of his happiness. To throw a proper light on
this

this matter, I must return to a higher principle.

God is sufficient to himself; in himself he finds his felicity, and cannot seek it elsewhere. If he extends his affections over what he exteriorly produces, it is through bounty, and not through need. In thus spreading himself abroad, his love remains within him, has always a reference to him, and is not the less concentrated in him: in a word, it is himself whom he loves, when he loves his creatures. The heart of God, even when he diffuses himself elsewhere, is therefore always collected within his unity.

Man, in this respect, is made to the image and resemblance of God: not that he can be, as God is, sufficient to himself; but in this sense, that all his affections should have a relation to God, and assume the character of unity, by their re-union in the unity of

God. In loving creatures, and loving himself, he only should love God. His love should have no other center, and whilst he takes into view divers other objects, he always should hold fast to this only object, as to his principle and as to his term. In this manner his affections spread themselves abroad like those of God, without dissipation, and he always remains collected in God, as God is always collected in himself. But that which God is from the infinite excellency of his nature, man cannot be but from the good use of his will.

He at first was created in this disposition of tending towards God alone; all his inclinations were fitted for that end, to which they led him with ease and naturally. In that consisted his original rectitude, and the perfect equilibrium of his will. But what has happened? Free to tend towards God, or
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towards his creatures, and to dispose, at pleasure, of the motions of his heart, he has receded from the unity of God, and has carried himself to the multiplicity of created objects; he has inverted the established order, and has placed his end in the means which God has given him to settle in himself.

Our nature being thus perverted by original sin, man lost that equilibrium of which I have been speaking. Even after that this sin is remitted to him through baptism, there remains in him a violent propensity towards the creatures; and though, with the help of grace, he may repress it, it happens, alas! too often that he yields to it. These objects solicit his heart and attract it towards them. His affections divide themselves, dissipate themselves, and diffuse themselves over them like
water

water. One desire begets another desire, one passion excites another passion. The heart wanders, and loses itself in the multiplicity. Not only does he no longer belong to God, but he no longer belongs to himself; he is drawn every way, and is torn, as it were, to pieces. Alternately divers objects lead him away, enslave and tyrannize over him: and as he meets with his happiness in none of them, he constantly roves from one to the other; he takes a taste of them all; disgust and satiety excite him daily to make new essays, and thus is he in perpetual motion: this is what the scripture terms, *the inconstancy of concupiscence* *. The inevitable cause of this inconstancy is, that man cannot possibly find in any creature any thing that fully satiates him. From hence pro-

* Wis. iv. 12.

ceeds the necessity which he is under of incessantly changing his objects, and of making new trials. Thus are his affections scattered every way, and find no where any centre of re-union.

Such is the condition of every sinner, without any exception: it was that of Austin before his conversion. What did he do when he became docile to grace which for so long a time had been pursuing him? He withdrew his heart from all those creatures amongst which he was divided: he collected the fragments, re-assembled the pieces, and carried towards God alone his re-united affections. He adhered to this perfect unity, advanced into it more and more, and entirely concentrated himself in it. Thus his heart, till then divided and torn, became one, because he no longer loved but one object, in which, by which, and for which he loved all
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that God either commanded him, or permitted him to love. His inconstancy, his restlessness, his agitations ceased, and he enjoyed peace, rest and happiness.

That which St. Austin experienced, is felt by all those who have been happy enough to have preserved their innocence, and never have strayed from God, or who have returned to him from their wanderings with the same sincerity. The first and chief effect of a true conversion, is this recollection of our dispersed affections; we were spread abroad, and God brings us home to ourselves: he gathers and re-assembles all our scattered inclinations, and re-unites them in himself; and should he allow them to extend to other objects, it is not to bring on a distraction, but to rivet them still more to himself.

For a long space of time, the whole occupation of a soul who returns to
God

God should be to second the attraction of grace that leads it to recollection. Hence obviously follow solitude and retirement, a custody of the senses, a removal from occasions not only dangerous, but barely dissipating, prayer, good thoughts, and pious reading, that nourish both mind and heart. The man who is sincerely converted, enters upon this plan of himself, and feels the indispensable necessity of it: and should it cost him many efforts to break through his ties, to renounce his former bad habits, and to betake himself to opposite ones, he is over and above indemnified, from the peace he now enjoys, and to which he had been a stranger before. This is not what some people, through contempt and derision, may style a spirituality, or a piece of mysticity; it is solid morality, that fits and extends to all mankind, and to every rank and condition.

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Let us do what we will, let us try all possible means to render ourselves happy, we shall never attain to it but by a full and peaceable possession of our heart; and we never shall possess our heart as long as its affections are not re-united to one single object that is capable of filling it; and this re-union can never take place as long as it is attached to any creature: this is a certain truth founded on undoubted experience: that the heart out of God will always be agitated, divided, torn, changeable and inconstant. Let us then conclude that the heart must be fixed in God, and never should be separated from him. These are so many axioms and first principles.

But this recollection and re-union of the affections in God has its degrees. The first and most necessary is that which excludes mortal sin; but that is not sufficient to establish the heart in a perfect

perfect rest. It is not an uncommon thing to meet with souls, in other respects pure and free from grosser vices, that are always disturbed and agitated; whose heart is always divided and distracted by a multiplicity of attachments which, though no ways criminal, are not in order nor in rule. The retrenchments or moderation of these affections is the continual exercise of virtue here below. If we would be at peace with ourselves, and attain to a perfect recollection in God, we must not indulge ourselves in this multitude of attachments whether frivolous or excessive; but must gradually disengage ourselves from them, until we absolutely no longer hold to any thing but God and to his will; we must regulate all our desires, all our affections, even the most lawful, until our heart be settled in so tranquil a state, as no longer

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to be voluntarily disturbed by any event.

This labour is of long duration, or rather it ends only with life. But I positively assert that it is indispensable, in order to have happiness upon earth. If the retrenchment of criminal affections produces in us the essence of rest; the retrenchment of superfluous affections, and of such as are lawful, adds to this rest a plenitude and a consistence, which cannot be had by any other endeavour.

Neither must we imagine that this labour is painful. That which is necessary to our happiness, that which leads us to it, that which by degrees procures it, may possibly be difficult, but it should not be deemed painful. An inward real pleasure is never separated from the conquest of one's self: the good order of the motions of the heart is an endless source of joy: God lends

lends his assistance; from day to day we grow stronger by our victories; and that, which, being viewed at a distance, seemed to be impossible, becomes easy when we come to the trial.

Let us believe St. Austin, who no doubt deserves to be credited. From the moment he had given himself to God, his whole life was employed in infinite labours for religion; he kept a constant watch over his heart, in order to root out even the smallest fibres of all human affections; he daily advanced in union with God: in this he found content, and was happy. He was the admiration of all those who knew him, for that eminent and undisturbed possession of himself, which no philosopher ever could come up to. In none of his writings can you discover the smallest sign of ill humour, peevishness, sadness, sorrow, disgust, or of repentance for having embraced

that new state of life. With a serene and steady eye he beheld the approach of his last hour, and expired in peace with a firm hope of enjoying eternal bliss in the bosom of his God. Would this have been his lot had he persevered in the wanderings of his youth?

XII.

I was pleasing to myself, and I was desirous to be pleasing in the eyes of men.

B. 2. c. 1.

THIS is the most ancient, the most general, the most deeply rooted, the most dangerous of all the maladies of our nature: self-complacency, and, what is its concomitant, the desire of being pleasing to others. This evil is so natural to us, that we do not perceive it, nor even do we look upon it

as an evil. It is however a real one, and the root of all evil.

From this source the defection of those perfect creatures the angels took its rise. Their own personal perfections were a snare to them; they could not behold them without being dazzled by them, and in some sort intoxicated with them. They took delight in themselves, appropriated to themselves their own advantages, and gloried in them. From hence their pride, their spirit of independance, their rebellion against God, their formal disobedience, whatever the subject of it may have been, their fall, and their dreadful punishment.

This evil must needs be a terrible evil, from its having attacked such excellent creatures, even under the eyes of God himself, who overthrew them.

The idea I form of it is, that it is the fund of the imperfection which is in-

herent in every creature, and the principle of its defectibility. It is but through pride that we are penetrable to sin; and therefore scripture has pronounced that pride is the root of all sin.

God alone has a right to a complacency in himself, because he holds all his perfections from the necessity of his being. But the creature, which of itself, is nothing, and owes all it has to God's pure bounty, cannot, without the greatest injustice, take complacency in itself. Its first duty, its most indispensable law is to glory in nothing, but incessantly to refer to God not only every thought and action, but the very fund of its being. In this habitual reference its rectitude consists. The instant it casts an eye of complacency on itself, it is perverted; by thus loving itself it necessarily becomes God's enemy, it robs him of
what

what is incommunicable in him, which is his glory; it withdraws itself from God's domain, and by this rebellion loses itself without resource, because it is reduced to itself, that is, to nothing, and is separated from the principle of all that is good.

The same evil that lost the rebel angel, lost also the first man. The devil, from without, acted upon him by temptation; but a temptation by far more delicate acted upon him more forcibly from within. Taken like the angel, with his own beauty, seduced by the desire of having, as well as God, the knowledge of good and evil, and of equalling in this point his Creator, he suffered himself to be pleased with the flattering speech of the devil, who had laid the snare into which his vanity made him fall.

I had therefore reason to say that this fatal self-complacency is the most

ancient of our maladies, since it was that of our first parent, and what we have inherited from him, with an additional malignity which his sin has annexed to it. It is also the most general. For who is the man who is exempt from it? Who is free from self-love? Who is not pleasing in his own eyes? Who is not desirous of being pleasing to others? We must be strangely ignorant of ourselves not to discover this lurking poison. The bud is in our hearts, we bring it with us into the world, it unfolds and fortifies itself with age, and is the corrupted source of all our passions.

Observe Children. As soon as they begin to have any knowledge, you will perceive this perverse love which prevails in every sentiment they have, and in every action they do. They refer every thing to themselves; they fancy that every thing is their due,
and

and are vexed at whatever opposes their desires, and crosses their inclinations. In proportion as they grow up, and become capable of reflection, they extend their self-love to more objects; but they conceal it more, because their reason shews the injustice of it. They disguise and hide it from others the better to obtain their ends; they slyly beg for praise, and lavishly bestow it on others, that they may have the like in return: in a word, they are interested, liars, cringingly complaisant, and in all that they seemingly do for others is done in the main entirely for themselves. Is not this the portrait of us all? Full of contempt, envy and jealousy in regard to others, in our own regard, we are full of presumption, love and admiration.

The saints, yes even the saints, who serve God with all their heart are infected with this evil as well as others;

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but

but they see and feel it better than others do, because they are more enlightened from above, are more attentive to themselves, and are more rigorous in their own condemnation. At every instant they find themselves betrayed into sentiments of which they are ashamed, under which they groan, and for which they humble themselves before God; they are incessantly employed in endeavouring to stifle them, and find that the conflict they are engaged in with themselves can only end but with life. But what grieves them the most is, that this plague lays fast hold of their virtues, of the graces and gifts of God, it infects every thing with its poison, and finds even in humiliations themselves motives of vain glory.

How wonderfully deep are the roots of this evil in the heart of man; who hardly has any sense of it until he begins

gins in good earnest to root it out! Then he feels the impossibility of success from his own endeavours, even with the joint assistance of an ordinary grace. He easily may correct what is palpably foul and coarse in it, but the nice and subtle bane of it escapes his notice. Its secret fibres so hiddenly lurk in the foldings of his heart, that he is not able to discern them, much less to unroot them. It is necessary that God himself should undertake this work; and then when we leave it to him, what does it not cost us! what anguish! what torment, what inward pain do we not experience when he presses the heart close to force out the corruption! It seems as if we were torn to pieces, as if we were divided from ourselves, as if we were stripped, as it were, of our very existence, and reduced to a state of annihilation itself. It is but too true:
nothing

nothing less than a moral annihilation is necessary, in order to destroy self-love down to the last roots of it. Whosoever has not gone through these operations of the heavenly physician, has not a complete idea of self-love, nor of the innate perversity of our nature.

From hence we may judge of the danger that attends this evil, since on the one hand it is ingrafted on our very bowels, and on the other, it is the source of all sin. No passion can be named that is not an offspring of self-love; no vice, that it does not engender, neither is there a human virtue, that does not spring from it: it slips into every thing, it extends to every thing, and vititates every thing.

A detail of the evils which are produced by it would be immense, and who could exhaust it? Falsity, both of words and of actions, flattery, affect

affectation, dissimulation, falsehood, human respects and hypocrisy, are all so many shoots of self-love: from hence also takes birth self-interest, that universal spring of all human actions, which is the source of so many crimes, as well as the cause of so many simulated virtues. Ambition, with its intrigues and manœuvres, its perfidies, meanesses and violence has no other origin; pride also and foolish vanity, flow from the same head, as well as raillery, criticism, satire, detraction and revenge.

To what other cause can we ascribe the irreligion, which in our days infests the Christian world, or that unhappy sect of modern philosophers? From whence so many books, in which libertinism and impiety erect their standard? From an itching for singularity and distinction; from a desire of reputation; from a view of giving
the

the law to the age they live in, and of appearing to be of a mind more firm and exalted, of a genius superior to the rest of men, and of a disposition independent of all authority, both divine and human. And what is all this but a daring self-love, that breaks through all rules and ties, and rushes headlong into the utmost excesses of the most irrational extravagancy.

The charm of pleasure is not the only cause of the corruption of both sexes. Vanity and the desire of pleasing, has a great share in it. It is even generally by this that the passion is excited. We are well pleased with ourselves, and we wish to adorn our person and shew ourselves, we wish to draw attention, and to be sought after; because in this is found the triumph of self-love. A secret pride, a certain self-complacency, a strong desire of being preferred to others, a spite,
and

and vexation, a jealousy of one's rivals, have at least as much influence on the weakneses of the sex, as the propensity of nature and the force of constitution.

What shall I say of devotion, and of all the ridiculous faults and extravagancies, which self-love has introduced into it? Are devout people at all times, those who take the least complacency in themselves, who are the least desirous of pleasing others? Do they not serve God for their own sake? Do they not esteem themselves the more, from a fancy that they have more virtue and piety? Do they not affectedly display their prayers and good works? Do they not distinguish themselves by a thousand singularities? Are they not pleased when they attract observation? Do they not sourly censure and piously detract their neighbour?

Great

Great God! what an abyſs of woes, miſeries and weakneſſes, of faults and ſins of all kinds has been produced, and will continue to the end of the world to be produced, by this baneful love that renders us idolaters of ourſelves! Is it then ſo difficult a taſk, for man to be convinced that it is his duty, as well as his intereſt to pleaſe God, to refer all to God, to acknowledge that he holds all from God, and that he is to expect all from him; that of himſelf he is helpleſs, and cannot hope from others any ſolid good or advantage? If there be a truth that his reaſon points out to him to evidence, is it not that all creatures are nothing of themſelves, have nothing of their own? And that God alone is the origin, the term, and the centre of all that is good, and of all felicity?

XIII.

The borders of friendship are miry.

Book 2. c. 2.

YES, those borders are miry between people of different sexes. Love borders on friendship: it is easy to step from the one to the other; but these two affections occupy seats in the heart, that are very different from each other: as much as the bottom on which friendship stands is firm and solid, so much is the ground of love slippery and miry, it yields under foot and sinks deep. These two soils, on their respective borders resemble each other, and at first, the difference between them is hardly perceptible: one thinks himself still on the steady basis of friendship, though he be already sunk deep into the mire of love.

It

It is but too common a thing to mistake these two sentiments, which are sometimes so intermixed in respect to the same person, that the step from the one to the other, is scarcely discernable. Those who are thus situated, imagine that they only love each other from the mind, and in the mind, on account of a similarity of good qualities, on account of a similarity of character and of sentiment; such, in reality, is true friendship, whose motive is pure and spiritual. But from the bottom of that concupiscence, which holds a close communication between the body and the soul, exhalations arise that imperceptibly thicken, darken all former serenity, and fully the purity of those refined sentiments. The heart is moved, it softens and melts into affection: the sight of each other becomes more interesting, their parting becomes more painful:

painful: and each in parting, takes along with him a remembrance of the other. In process of time, they converse with greater confidence, they unfold more freely their sentiments, and trust each other with their closest opinions.

When they have got to this pass, the flesh is not tardy in being of the party. Their senses are awakened, their eyes go in search of each other, they meet, and speak a language, which the mouth durst not utter. Still for a time they presume that this affection is pure: they even reject every indelicate suggestion, and aim at nothing but what is decent and becoming. But how rare is it, should the intercourse continue, that the bounds marked out by decency and conscience are so adhered to, as to have no other view than a lawful and christian union; and that they supersede till that moment,

every improper familiarity, and every unbecoming liberty !

Be therefore, in guard against such connections, especially you young people, whose imagination is more lively, and whose heart is more sensible ; you, to whom the smallest faults, nay, even the appearances in this kind, are of so dangerous a tendency. Rely not on your piety, on the horror which you have of evil, on your precautions, on your reserved disposition, or on the purity of your intentions. When you think that you are but friends, you are already something more. The interval that separates these two sentiments, is imperceptible ; the brink is infinitely slippery, one step more, and you fall into the mire, and your weak and vain efforts to draw back, will only plunge you into it the deeper.

Believe those who are wiser than yourselves. The safest way is, never
to

to form such connections. Be thankful for the severe vigilance of your parents, who withhold you from them; the more agreeable they may seem to be, the greater is your disposition to abuse them, the less you see of danger, the more is there danger for you. Set not your foot on this quick-sand, you will not withdraw it so readily as you think. To a certain point you are master of your heart, but the moment in which you are so, and the moment in which you are not, touch one another.

The state in which the danger of these connections is the greatest (who would believe it!) is that of matrimony. The extreme liberty which our manners grant to married women of going and coming, of receiving, and paying visits, of being at balls, assemblies, plays, and of every party of pleasure, exposes them much more

than the single state they were in, in which they were superintended. In this state they take offence at being so: they think themselves capable of guarding themselves, and pretend to be mistresses of their own conduct. A husband as little dares to interfere, as he apprehends the imputation of jealousy; and is so much the more reserved in forming suspicions and suffering them to appear, as they are the more injurious. He presumes on the virtue of his wife, and on the known probity of the friend who visits her. She herself thinks that she is so much the more secure, as she sincerely loves her husband, as she is attached to her duty, and as she has in abhorrence, the very thought of a conjugal breach. The friend also has no other intention, than that of enjoying the conversation of an amiable woman.

But

But a perseverance in these sentiments is of short duration, especially if the visits be long and frequent. The affection for the husband cools by degrees: he is found to have faults, his conduct gives pain: this is communicated to the friend, who forms a design of taking advantage from it. At length a criminal connection ensues, which is so much the more tranquil, as there is more facility to cloak it.

Less scruple arises from this criminality, should the husband be the first to set a bad example. The temptation of not being prudent is greater to her, when he, on his side, is not so himself. Spite and revenge contribute their share. A strange revenge! and on whom does it fall? Does the bad example of the one, authorise the imitation of the other?

Husbands and wives be more reserved in forming connections, than if you were free; you will be faithful to each other, but in proportion as you are attentive to shun them. Reflect on the odious nature of the sin of adultery, and on the pernicious consequences which every way attend it. I will enlarge no more on this head. I only add, with a heart-felt sorrow, that it is a horrid thing that marriage, which is a state so holy in the views of religion, which is the source of the human race, and the basis of both natural and civil society, should serve in our days, as a veil to libertinism, that people should avail themselves of it, to live with greater licentiousness, and that it should be less respected amongst Christians, than it was amongst Pagans.

Let

Let us, if it be possible, return to the primitive institution of nature, from whence we have hitherto receded to the opposite extreme. Let wives keep their homes, and attend to their domestic œconomy: let them have an eye on their servants, and preside over their work; let them nurse and bring up their own children; let them delight in their infant company; let their going abroad be unfrequent; let them deem it a dishonor to be alone with any one, but their respective husbands: thus would cease those innumerable disorders and scandals, which so universally prevail.

Young widows may apply to themselves, what morality they see here adapted to their state of life; in the principles of christianity, as well as in the rule of decency, they are bound to a greater circumspection, and to a severer confinement than married wo-

men; should they not marry again, they are looked upon to have bid adieu to the world, and to hold no other relation with it, than their affairs demand, and the well-being of their children.

XIV.

Through a proud debasement, and a restless lassitude, I was going, in withdrawing myself from thee, to throw myself fruitlessly into matters of sorrow, which were multiplying without end. Book 2. c. 2.

ST. Auſtin, in the deſcription of his wanderings, has drawn the hiſtory of the human heart. What he felt, is exactly what all thoſe experience, who follow their unruly deſires. No philoſopher ever painted the paſſions with more truth, energy, and profoundneſs,

foundness. But he only knew his misfortune after he was freed from it. For the evils which befall the soul, are very unlike to those of the body. These are felt the most at the time we labour under them; whereas those, whose property it is to blind, are never observed, till we have obtained a cure; our eyes then are open, and we see the danger we were in.

The recovery of St. Austin was perfect, because it was the work of a special grace, with which he faithfully corresponded. Then reflecting on the former state of his soul, he clearly saw that the passions are at once proud and debasing, that they hold the soul in constant agitation and restlessness, that they withdraw it from God, and incessantly plunge it into new cares. Four characters of the passions, which I mean to unfold.

Great

Great passions are commonly said to fall to the share of great souls. In one sense this is true, for where there is a greater spring of action and energy, the stronger the passions are. But nothing is more false, if it be meant, that the passions give to the soul either grandeur, elevation, or dignity. They all degrade and debase it, because they enslave it to objects which are unworthy of it, induce it to make use of unjust and shameful means to obtain their gratification, and in the use of these objects, they hurry it to extremes which dishonor it.

This is pretty much agreed to with regard to avarice, which renders the soul a slave to money; and with regard to the love of sensual pleasures, which renders the soul a slave to the body. These two passions, in whatever light they are viewed, were never reckoned to carry with them any thing
that

that is noble or elevated. But we are apt to think differently of ambition, that leads to a desire of honors, of great dignities, and of a great reputation in whatever line it may be.

However, what are these honors? What are these dignities? What is this reputation? When they are viewed in the light which flatters the passion, they are but a vain smoke, devoid of solidity, devoid of reality. Honor in itself, is the reward of merit. Does passion consider it in this light? Is merit the object which it aims at? Great dignities carry with them great duties, great cares, and a great slavery: do those duties and ideas tempt the ambitious man? Reputation is then only worthy of envy, when it is founded on solid titles, on great virtues, on noble actions, on useful talents. Are these the incentives to reputation, when passion alone directs? All those distinctions

distinctions and pre-eminences, which are the object of ambition, produce no other effect than to puff up the soul, and feed it with wind.

Besides, what are the sentiments which ambition begets in the heart? They are sentiments of presumption, jealousy, envy, and of contempt for others, all low and mean sentiments, which the ambitious carefully conceal under contrary appearances, and could wish to hide them from themselves. A manifest proof is this, that they debase and dishonor them in the eyes of others, as well as in their own. Again, what means does ambition employ to obtain the wished for object? In this it particularly shews itself to be low, shameful, and disgraceful. Who is the ambitious man who would be willing to have published all the means he has used, and all the projects he has concerted to compass his ends?

ends? As to the use which the ambitious make of their power, it is no other than to gratify self-interest, ostentation and vanity. The noblest, therefore, of the passions, is in fact the most debasing.

However, this debasement, easily reconciles itself in the heart with pride, which is the most general source of every passion, and shares in them all, even the very meanest: pride with regard to God, against whom the ambitious man rebels: pride, with regard to himself; because he esteems himself the more when he can indulge his passion; and pride with regard to others, whom he pities or despises, should they be less rich, and less in the way of purchasing pleasures.

To this proud debasement there is constantly annexed a restless lassitude; which is another character of the passions. What does the heart aim at, in all its motions?

tions? At happiness and repose. To this is directed every agitation and every fatigue, which it goes through in the pursuit of divers objects. It is this hope that buoys it up under a thousand cares and torments. And what fruit is produced? None, but that of spending and consuming all its strength in vain. Should it obtain what it desires, will it rest there? Will it stop to recruit its exhausted strength? By no means; immediately new solitudes, and oftentimes greater, closely follow the former: we must keep ourselves in the rank we have attained, we must watch over what we have acquired, we must preserve that fleeting, capricious, haughty, interested beauty. What a source of care and anxiety! Above us we behold a higher step; inclination prompts us to ascend to it. The rank we are already in, naturally leads to it. We have accumu-

accumulated great riches; it is the best means to accumulate greater. We are satiated and disgusted with one object, the heart of itself flies to another, which attracts us by its novelty; but this also is soon followed by a fresh disgust. Such is the circle of inquietude and lassitude, into which the passions betray us, without ever allowing us leisure to extricate ourselves out of it. What a life!

Meanwhile we remove from God, the only source of happiness and repose: we may think of him at first, but the thought being importune, we endeavour to banish it; we at least lose sight of it, and consider it as an advantage, that the idea of God and of religion no longer molests us, or obstructs our projects: from forgetfulness we fall into a state of indifference and insensibility. It seems that God is nothing to us, that he has no right
over

over us, and that we have nothing to fear or hope for from him. To this length do our passions lead us. The number of those who retain any notion, any fear of God, is the smallest. And among the others, many there are, especially in this age, who step from libertinism to irreligion.

Finally the passions are a source of bitter and of keen sorrow. Their pleasures are false, cheating, rare, transitory and superficial; whereas their pains are real, frequent, durable and profound. Besides the evil which they bring on the sinner in regard to his ~~exteriour~~ possessions, his health, his fortune and reputation, they load him with shame and ignominy, so as to render him insupportable to himself, and his own thoughts burdenous. Under their dominion he successively becomes a prey to the most violent agitations of mind, from whence he drops into a
disgust

disgust for every thing, or into a still more oppressive lethargy. Too happy could his evils end with death, and terminate in annihilation. But all endeavours to take up such a persuasion prove vain and fruitless. He therefore lives in a cruel uncertainty, or in a desperate certainty of his eternal loss. The only thing which in the least composes him, is that the moment is perhaps at a distance: but of how much? of ten, fifteen, twenty years at most. The fatal moment comes at last. He lived unhappy, and dies a reprobate.

XV.

Thou wast always with me, practising upon me a cruelty full of mercy, and intermixing with my unlawful pleasures most painful stumbling-blocks, that I might go in search of a pleasure which nothing can thwart. Book 2. c. 2.

THE sinner does not believe it; but it is true that the obstacles which thwart his pleasures, and the bitterness which attends them, are the effects of the goodness of God, who thereby means to disgust him of what he enjoys, and bring him back to a pure and an innocent enjoyment. Were not the false pleasures of the world strewed with thorns; were not the pursuit of them generally opposed and traversed; were not their fruits exceedingly bitter; did not the enjoyment of them cloy and disgust, a return to God would almost be impossible.

ble, because the passions would meet with a kind of unmixed felicity.

But God, who always has merciful views over the sinner who has forsaken him, makes him pay dear for his moments of pleasure; he opposes a thousand obstacles, and intermixes disappointments and chagrins of every kind, to withdraw him from his wanderings, by causing him to know from experience, that happiness is not to be found where he is in search of it. If the prodigal, after some fleeting instants of enjoyment, had not experienced misery and hunger, he would not have reflected on his past conduct, nor would he have resolved on a return to the house of his father. The present evil brings to remembrance the good things that are past, and excites a hope of possessing them again: this is what brings back to God the major part of sinners. I was happy as long

as I was innocent ; by becoming guilty, I am become wretched : let us therefore return to the path of innocence and of happiness.

God does not require, even in the severity of the Christian dispensation, that we should taste of no sort of joy ; but he will have us to know, and even to feel, that true joy is only to be found in his service ; that a pure tranquil conscience is the source of it ; and that all pleasure which reason disowns, and which religion condemns, is always more bitter than sweet.

By what infatuation therefore do we refuse to be happy, since the strongest of all proofs, which is that of an inward sentiment, clearly convinces us that happiness is not to be found in any thing that is unlawful ? Why will we not be persuaded that the most desirable of all things is peace of mind, and that we never can taste this peace, but

as we are in order, as the body is subject to the soul, as the passions are obedient to reason, and as reason is obedient to God? In this disposition we make of our duty a pleasure; we possess God, and possess ourselves; we have within us an inexhaustible source of joy; of a joy that is pure, serene, and of reflection: a joy that does not tire or fatigue, that admits of no disgust, trouble or repentance.

XVI.

My father was unconcerned about what I might be to thee; or whether I was chaste; provided I was eloquent. B. 2. c. 3.

PATRICIUS, a citizen of Tagaste, and in middling circumstances, exceeded the bounds of his means to procure for his son Austin the best of

educations. He spared no expence to give him the best masters, and even sent him to Carthage to perfect his talents. It is not on this account that St. Austin blames him. But he adds, provided I was eloquent, he was in no great concern whether I was pious or chaste.

That a heathen, or at most a catechumen, such as Patricius then was, should have been in that temper of mind, is nothing very surprising; but that such should be the disposition of most christian parents, is what is as astonishing as it is deplorable. All do not exceed in expences as Patricius did, to cultivate the minds of their children; but most are too indifferent about their religion and morals. Their grand object is to get them trained to their views of ambition and interest, which they project for their settling in life. If they perceive in their children fit ta-

lents

lents to advance and make a figure in the world, it is all they wish; and the education they give them is directed to that.

Nevertheless religion and morals are the two most essential points of every good education; every thing else should bear a reference to this, or at least should never counteract it: it is to the interest of the children, as well as to the interest of the parents themselves, that these two material articles should be the leading objects, as an inattention to them seldom fails to bring on sooner or later an unprofitable repentance. But without confining myself to what merely relates to parents, I mean to consider the matter in a more extensive view, and examine whether the present education of children be such as it ought to be in this particular, and to propose that, which

in my opinion, might render it more perfect.

In what is it made to consist? Children of both sexes are taught to dance, by which they are formed to an easy and graceful comportment, and all awkwardness in mien, gesture and motion is removed. This part of education, which is so much insisted on, is after all merely exterior; it regards only the body: it is even foreign to what is most important to the body, I mean a good constitution.

They are taught to sing, to play on various instruments, to draw, and to paint: a considerable time is employed in this, particularly with girls: these talents have nothing in them that is serious or useful; they are only fit to amuse in future some of their leisure moments.

They are taught geography, heraldry, the elements of history, and some
ancient

ancient or foreign languages. I see nothing in all this besides an exercise of memory, a set of words, names, and dates, a very slender, frivolous and superficial erudition, which generally ends in filling their heads with a foolish vanity.

Boys are mostly taught the rules of grammar, of eloquence and poetry. The best authors are explained to them, and their beauties pointed out to them: they are made to translate and imitate them in their compositions. But even supposing that they were instructed in these principles with propriety, and according to the best method, this only serves to form their taste for what is termed liberal arts and sciences; to enable them to speak and write with elegance and purity of language, to judge properly of productions of genius, and to produce some themselves either in prose or verse. I call this a cultivating

cultivating of the imagination ; but I see nothing yet that can help reason, or benefit the heart.

At last they are taught philosophy. But a strange one it is. A subtle, fulsome, and useless logic of Aristotle ; a bare, lank morality without any substance, a metaphysic that contains some great truths relating to God and the soul of man, but handled after a dry and tedious manner.

It should seem that scholastic philosophers had chiefly in view to strip these three parts of education of what renders them interesting to children, of what aggrandizes their ideas, unfolds their soul and ripens their judgment ; and their scope is but to sharpen their wit, to fit them for dispute, to enable them to maintain the pro and the con on the same subject, to throw leading truths into problems, and invent objections to attack them, which
they

they take to be, oftentimes foolishly, insolvable; in short to answer boldly right or wrong to the questions proposed, and to be well pleased with themselves provided they are not put to a stand, which is deemed the height of dishonour.

Natural philosophy is taught much better now than formerly. It comprehends the laws of motion, a good deal of geometry, astronomy, optics, statics and hydrostatics, the general system of the world, and the explication of the principal phenomena of nature. This branch gratifies curiosity, it engages the mind, and renders it capable of application. But secondary causes are too long dwelt upon, the minds of youth are not raised to the contemplation of the author of so many wonders; which is, beyond a doubt, God's first design in the creation of the universe. Hence it is that religious

religious sentiments are so rarely to be found in those who give themselves to the study of nature, and who have the image of it constantly before them.

Religion makes an article apart. It hardly has a share in the other branches of education: it seems to be an insulated science, which has no connection with, or any influence over the other sciences: and therefore it is generally the thing in which children are the least instructed, which affects them the least, and of which they are far from having that idea which they ought to form of it. Masters seldom speak of it to their pupils, and much less think of bringing their lessons to this capital point. This task is left to preachers, whose sermons are rarely within the reach of youth.

It is however an incontestable principle, that a good education should be entirely grounded on religion, and entirely

tirely directed to religion: that without this, all talents are frivolous or dangerous; all knowledge is vain, and devoid of every solid foundation. The object of a good education is to form the mind and the heart of man, and to prepare him, through the knowledge and love of his duties, for a faithful discharge of them in reference to his last destination: and I say, that it is religion alone, taken in its full extent, to which this task appertains. It will be easy to me to demonstrate this truth, and at the same time to shew, that whatever is true, beautiful, noble and useful in all arts and sciences is drawn from religion.

To come to a detail, let us begin with philosophy, unless you refer logic to God, who is essentially the truth, who is the primitive, the universal truth, who comprehends in himself all other truths, who binds them together,

together, classes and subordinates them; who is the first, and grand link of the vast chain of sciences; or rather who is the centre from whence they all proceed, and in which they all terminate: unless you teach children, that God is also the light which guides the eye of the soul, and unveils intellectual objects: that he is the principle of all certainty, and the basis of all proofs, which in their last analysis are reduced to his veracity: unless you also convince them of the darkness, and weakness of their own mind, of the illusions of their imagination and senses, which are led away by appearances, of the thick clouds which are formed by the passions: clouds which take from us the sight of objects, or cause us to see them differently from what they are: unless you make them sensible that if they do not call upon God, in their investigations, in their doubts

doubts and difficulties; if they know not how to respect the bounds, which he has set to our knowledge, nor to restrain a dangerous curiosity, they infallibly must go astray, and err in most essential matters: unless you make them feel, that the cause of all the errors and uncertainties of ancient philosophers, geniuses in other respects great and penetrating, and famous for their application to the discovery of truth, is, that they either know not God, or did not glorify him as God; what solid and interesting logic will you give them? What art will you teach them to discover, to prove, to arrange, to unfold any truth? The dry and gloomy analytics of Aristotle, his cold and subtle dialectic, his categories, his barren theory of propositions, and of syllogism, will never open to them the sources of invention,

or

or furnish them with arguments, and with a solution of difficulties.

Morality, the precepts of which reach to a vast extent, is evidently grounded, with all its branches, on religion. Reason, if left to itself, cannot trace it back to its first principles, cannot take in all its relations, nor sufficiently animate us to the practice of it. It is religion that fixes the idea of the law of nature, which is the basis of all other laws, and invariably determines the objects of it. It is religion that points out to us the origin of our duties, in the positive will of God; the detail of them, in his commandments and prohibitions; the motives for the observance of them, in his supreme dominion, in our relations with him, and in his promises, and his threats; the means which enable us to observe them, in the supernatural helps which
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God offers us, in the sacraments, which are the channels of them; in prayer which obtains them, and in vigilance which guards and preserves them.

Reason alone tells us indeed that we should adore God, that we should love him, and pay him an interior worship; and it is of moment, to make youth sensible how far it guides us in this respect: but the bare light of reason, does not sufficiently instruct us in the nature of this adoration, of this love and worship, or in the consequences, that result from the practice of them. We must receive information on these objects from religion.

Neither are we taught by reason the destination of man, the free views which God had concerning him, or the state in which he was created; nor does it inform us of the cause of the great ignorance of his mind, and the

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deep rooted corruption of his heart; the knowledge of these particulars must come from religion.

Reason affords us but a very superficial notion of the passions, and of self-love that is the principle of them; it prompts us but feebly to overcome them, and the means which it suggests for that purpose, are equally feeble and insufficient, nor do they strike at the root of the evil. Religion alone makes known to us our maladies, and furnishes us with proper remedies.

Hitherto I have only spoken of that part of morality, which considers man as he is in himself. That branch which considers him with a reference to society, whether natural or civil, is much more extensive. The unfolding of these objects, at least of the general principles of them, cannot in justice be dispensed with in the education of youth. Now these principles, relating

lating to the origin of society, to marriage which is the basis of it, to domestic administration, to the right of nations, to political government, to legislation, to the obedience due to laws, and to the knowledge of the laws, I defy reason to establish them unless supported by revelation, and unless they be extracted from the very bowels of the Christian religion.

I now ask; a morality like this on which religion reflects so glaring a light, would it not be more pleasing, more instructive and interesting, more satisfactory both to the mind and heart, than that which is generally dictated in the schools? Is it not necessary that those who are to fill great places in society, should have exact notions of all these things? or will they be made over to theology, under pretence that the chief knowledge of them comes from revelation? Should

it be objected that the time is too short, sufficiently to treat on so vast a matter; let the time allotted to natural philosophy be curtailed: can three or even four years be deemed too long space to form a Christian philosopher?

Metaphysics encompasses the knowledge of God, of the human soul, and of the relations that intervene between this soul and body. But it is to religion we owe the strongest proofs of the existence of God, and of his providence, to this also we owe the demonstration of his unity, the just notion of his attributes, their harmony with respect to each other, as well as with respect to the free will of man. In all these matters, what has reason discovered, when left to itself? A few truths imperfectly conceived, and intermixed with many errors. To be convinced of this, we need only read
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the ancient philosophers. Why then should we not pay due honor to religion, for the helps which it has lent to reason, and point out to youth with particular care, the advantages accruing from it? What respect and love would they not conceive for it?

Our soul, its spirituality, and immortality, the origin of its ideas, its innate principles, the tie of its union with the body, their reciprocal dependence, which is the effect of the will, and of the action of God, are wrapt up in darkness without revelation; it is this that guides reason in its researches, and teaches it that which of itself it never would have discovered. The scriptures are the source from whence St. Austin, St. Thomas, and Christian philosophers have drawn their way of reasoning: is it not a duty to indicate to youth this same source, in order to excite their warm-

est gratitude; and set before them the errors, the doubts and pitiful uncertainties of profane antiquity on these important subjects?

Will natural philosophy be less curious, less instructive or useful, if instead of confining yourself to the explication of effects from secondary causes, you represent it to youth in its moral light? If in all the beings which form the universe, you should shew them the work of a Creator, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and infinitely industrious; if you should teach them that man is the lord of all nature, that the whole is destined for his use; the principal use of which is to glorify God, to admire his magnificence, to acknowledge his gifts, and never to abuse them, to contemplate how beautiful his mansion of happiness must be, since God has so lavishly embellished the transitory abode

abode of his pilgrimage? What benefit can accrue to us from the contemplation of the order that reigns in the universe, of the laws which bodies follow in their production, their increase and decay, their motions, their action and reaction; of the admirable structure of organized bodies, the astonishing variety of the species of animals, the aptitude of their constitution, members and figure for the element which they inhabit, and the food which they take in: in a word, of the ravishing spectacle which heaven, earth and sea display, unless this contemplation bring us to a constant reflection on the author of so marvellous a production?

In the immense multitude of objects which nature offers to our reflection, the consideration of the primary cause, to which we must invariably return, is no sort of obstacle to the investigation of secondary causes, which

is properly the study of the naturalist: on the contrary the more he proceeds in the discovery of these, the more frequently must he return to the other, and he cannot but observe that God is the soul, the life, the spring, and intelligence of the universe. What inconveniency can there be in habituating youth in the knowledge, admiration and love of God in his works, and in those very works which he has created only for man?

Again, we cannot take a step in the study of nature, without meeting with obscurities and mysteries, the essence of bodies, their intimate texture, their hidden composition, the principles of their formation and propagation, are impenetrable to our researches; the whole teems with difficulties, which God alone can resolve. The naturalist who loses sight of God for one instant, inevitably must fail in all his

his attempts: he will then be reduced to chance, that refuge of ignorance and impiety, or be satisfied with the vague word, nature, which has no meaning, unless it mean a primary and intelligent cause.

It may be easily perceived, that whilst I propose a new plan of philosophy, as to the substance of things, I could also wish that another method were adopted in the teaching of it; that it were dressed in a proper garb, and in its genuine colours, that it were animated with life and sentiment, and that such grand, noble, and sublime matters, which open the most beautiful field for eloquence, were treated on, and unfolded in an eloquent manner. This no doubt would be more difficult, than the adhering to the ordinary method, and the barbarous style of schools. It would be necessary that the masters themselves, should know
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how to write and to speak. But provided they had the least turn to be eloquent, the very grandeur of the subject, and the new form they would give it, would heat and wind up the genius. Observe how Plato, Cicero, and St. Austin handle these matters. How noble, how exalted, how spirited are their discourses! Are they on this account less accurate, less methodical, less perspicuous? Unless masters be animated with the same fire, they never will teach philosophy as they ought, and never will inspire a love for it.

I therefore constitute the essence of education in philosophy. And that the minds of youth may be prepared for it, I could wish that their first studies glanced, as much as possible, on morality and religion. They should be informed of what is solid in polite literature, and be taught the use that

an honest man should make of it, as well as the danger and facility of abusing it, when vanity engages us in it, and when it is made subservient to the passions. What evils at all times, have not sprung from poets and orators, from writers of every description, whose fancy, tongue and pen were governed by their passions. Plato and Cicero, * though heathens, have demonstrated that probity should be the essential quality of an orator; and that eloquence should never be employed, but in the defence and protection of innocence, justice, and virtue. Horace determines the duty of the poets: † which is to form young people to virtue, and withdraw their ears from obscene discourses, to instruct them in precepts, pleasingly and agreeably dressed to correct their passions,

* Plat. in Gorgia. Cic. de orat.

† Hor. Epist. ad August.

to relate to them great atchievements, to celebrate the divinity, to teach them prayers of invocation in public calamities. This is what those bright geniuses, in their intervals of good sense and reason, conceived of eloquence and poetry, and shall we blush to inculcate, at their example, the same maxims on the minds of youth?

What solid advantage can be reaped from history, if it be confined to the bare knowledge of names, facts and dates, if it be not referred to policy, which is the morality of states; if the cause be not investigated of great events, either from the virtues or vices of nations, from the human passions, from a providence that rules all, and constitutes every thing to its hidden ends? He who applies not to history as a religious philosopher, will never be a great proficient in that line.

I say

I say nothing of the other parts of education, which are merely exterior, or amusing, or frivolous. Religion ranks them in their proper place, by teaching us to value them only as they are valuable, or even to disregard them: to give them place but as a rational relaxation, and never to engage in them so as to prejudice either duty, piety, or morals.

Such is, in my opinion, the plan of education, that best becomes an intelligent free being, who is formed to the image of God, who is destined to possess him for ever, and is placed here below during a certain time, to merit this inestimable possession, by an accomplishment of his duties.

It is religion and morality that teach man these duties, and enable him to fulfil them: on religion therefore and morality, should the education of children be grounded, as soon

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as a dawn of reason and understanding arises in their mind. I know that the lessons should be adapted to their age; I know that at first, they will give but little attention to them, and the manner of conceiving them will be imperfect; but the full comprehension of them will come hereafter, and so much the sooner, as they began early to imbibe them. The point is to bend their minds that way, and habituate them in religious ideas, as the only ideas that are truly great, solid, and worthy of a rational being, and form in them, if I may be allowed the expression, a moral appetite. This education will doubtless more or less succeed according to the natural dispositions of children. But if true genius be the moral and philosophical genius, it is but by these means that it will unfold itself in every child who has the bud of it.

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Who reasonably can doubt that children thus brought up will not, one day, draw every possible advantage from their talents, both for themselves and society; that they will not become great men, capable of the most distinguished employments, full of useful views for public benefit: men of pure morals, and of an irreproachable conduct: good fathers, good magistrates, excellent ministers of religion, the light, the example, and the support of their fellow citizens.

It must not be imagined that this, although serious education, is destitute of allurements. Morality well expounded is the charm of every good mind: of itself it has nothing that is gloomy. An able master will find a thousand ways to render it attracting and amusing to children. The moral tracts of profane authors, are the most pleasing in their lectures. Besides I

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do not exclude the culture of the agreeable arts, such as music, drawing, and dancing: I do not exclude the plays of youth, nor the exercises which give strength, pliancy and agility to the body. As to philosophy, if in the choice of the matter, and the manner of treating it, the plan be adopted which I have chalked out, it will readily be granted that the study of it, will be incomparably more interesting than it is at present.

This plan, moreover, is not a mere speculation: it is very practicable. In this kind, as well as in every other, the most perfect should be aimed at, and in the execution we should draw as near to it as we can. I do not enter into an explication of the means, that are conducive to the accomplishment of the work. It is proper to leave them to the disposition of masters. The whole depends on their knowledge,

knowledge, prudence and zeal. When once they are put in the way, they will be able to perfect, what I have here barely sketched out.

XVII.

This law which is written in the heart of men, which iniquity itself does not efface. Book 2. c. 4.

IT is the law of nature which St. Austin thus characterizes; it is the fundamental and first law, it is the source and principle of the other laws; an eternal and immutable law, grounded on the one hand, on nature, and the rights of God; and on the other, on the essence of man, and on his intimate relations with God and his fellow creatures. It was at God's option to create man, or leave him in nonentity. But in creating him, he

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could not dispense with himself in imposing on him this law, and in making it his principal obligation. To speak properly, it is not the effect of God's will; but it rules and directs his will. How sacred and venerable must that law be, which in one sense is the law for God himself!

It is written in the heart of men: written with the finger of God, written at the moment they are born. As soon as reason begins to dawn, as soon as they are capable of reflection, the first thing which the soul perceives, through the help of *the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*,* are the principles of this law: the first sentiment which the soul experiences, is that of moral good and evil. It is properly from this moment that they become men: till then they were only

* John i. 8.

animals governed by a natural instinct. They then, therefore, have an idea of obligation and of duty; they feel themselves tied and subjected to a being who is above them; and when they stray from this dependence by an abuse of their liberty, their conscience stings them, and their reason condemns them.

It is written in the heart of all men; in the heart of barbarous nations, as well as in that of civilized people; the savages themselves are not ignorant of it. It has been, and will be known at all times, in all places, and wherever mankind subsist. To have no notion of it, is to be devoid of reason, and to be classed with idiots. For it is in the knowledge of this law, that the use of reason consists, and this reason is enlightened in proportion as it penetrates further

into the branches and consequences of it.

It is every where the same. Every where, when consulted, it answers in the same manner; it is not susceptible of any change, because it does not depend on prejudice or education, nor on conventions, climate, or government, neither is it subject to the views or wills of men. Every where, that which bears the mark of falsehood, injustice, and violence, is looked upon as bad in itself, and forbidden anteriorly to any positive law. Every where, that which invades the rights of man, that which degrades or dishonors him, is held as unlawful. Every where, respect for the divinity, reciprocal obligations between parents and children, fidelity to their engagements are considered, as sacred and indispensable duties.

Nothing

Nothing can efface this law from the heart of man. How great soever his malice and depravation may be, he still retains in his conscience a clear sighted and inexorable judge, whom he neither can deceive or bribe. In vain does he attempt to blind himself to his crimes, in vain does he employ all the powers of his reason to exculpate his conduct; the secret decisions of the law of nature remain still unshaken; they are constantly present to his thought, whenever he enters into himself, and constantly pronounce against him, without leaving him any other resource, than to acknowledge his guilt, and correct his conduct.

How then has it happened, that among the philosophers of antiquity, and even in the heart of Christianity, especially in our days, there have been men so perverse and impudent, as to dare avowedly to attack the existence of

a natural law, to confound good and evil, and strip human actions of all morality? I own that this appears to me to be inconceivable; for it is equivalently declaring oneself a monster before the whole world, I mean a monster of malice and falsehood; a wretch, who running counter to his reason and conscience, saps the foundations of religion, of virtue, and of all natural and civil society; gives a loose to every vice, authorises every crime, plunges mankind into darkness, disorder and confusion, and sinks his own species beneath the condition of brute beasts.

If it be astonishing that such horrid systems should have been published, it is still more astonishing, that the writings that contain them, should have been so acceptable, so much sought for, and so much applauded as they have been by many, who have
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gone so far in their infatuation, as to deem them master-pieces, and works worthy of immortality. It is, however, evident, that such productions, which are the most crying, and the most manifest abuse of talents, cannot but shock every good mind, and excite indignation in every good heart; and that they deserve, as well as their authors, the severest animadversion of the laws. No robber, no profligate, no prisoner is more dangerous, or more punishable. But if the existence of the law of nature cannot be called in question, without the most glaring imposition and insincerity, let us consider what results from it, with respect to the Christian religion.

The law of nature points out to us the necessity of a religion; it is the basis and foundation of it; but itself is not a religion. We do not draw from it any light by which we may

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know,

know what sort of worship God requires of us, nor by what means we can obtain his favours, or avert his justice, that is irritated by our crimes.

We draw no light from it to know what the free designs were of the Creator in forming us, what end he formed us for, by what means we may attain it, what happiness or misery await us after death; whether man persevered in the first state in which he was created, or whether he fell from it through his own fault, and whether there be a resource for being reinstated again. The ancient philosophers having lost the tracks of primitive revelation, or not being able to unravel it from vulgar traditions, consulted the law of nature, and found it silent on all these heads; and it is silent still to all who either will not, or cannot make application elsewhere, because they are not its proper object,
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and depend on the positive will of God. But as it clearly gives us to understand, that a knowledge of all these points is indispensably necessary to us, it leads us to admit of the necessity, and consequently of the existence of a revelation.

If there has been a revelation, this same natural law tells me that it must have been as ancient as the world, and must have begun with the human race. That it must have been propagated from age to age, through the channel of tradition; that if the track of it has been altered, or even lost among most nations, it could not have happened but through their own fault; that every man who can come at any knowledge of it, is obliged to spare no pains to acquire it; that should any doubts or confused glimmerings of it arise in his soul, he ought to pray to God to enlighten him, and that he will
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be responsible for his indifference in it, or voluntary ignorance of it.

The law of nature tells me also, that as man never could have been without a religion, and a revealed religion, or believed to be such, Deism must be a chimera, an absurdity, and an impiety: a chimera, because no nation has ever adopted it; an absurdity, because it is contrary to this evident principle, that it belongs only to God, to prescribe the manner after which he chuses to be honored, relatively to his glory, and his views upon man; an impiety, because a Deist chuses to live without a religion, or to form one according to his own fancy.

The law of nature then does not permit us to acquiesce in Deism; and absolutely enacts that we should make choice of a religion that has been revealed: now there is not, and there cannot

cannot be but one that deserves this title. For it is evident that idolatry could not have God for its author; Mahometanism carries with it all the marks of imposture; besides neither idolatry or Mahometanism, are so ancient as the human race; and it is necessary that the religion which God has revealed, should have begun at that epoch.

It therefore must be Christianity, which has no other origin than that of the world, which shews us Jesus Christ promised as Redeemer to our first parents, immediately after their fall; which shews him to us, I say, in the most authentic monuments, announced from age to age, by an oral tradition to the posterity of Adam; and since Moses, by a written tradition to the nation from whence this Redeemer was to take birth; which informs us of his nativity, his life, his mission, his miracles, his death, his
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resurrection and ascension; all facts which are averred and incontestable; all facts which were foretold with all their circumstances by a long series of prophets; all facts which were written by witnesses, either ocular or contemporary: which shew us his Church rising from the midst of prodigies, that were wrought at first on the apostles by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and then by the apostles themselves amongst all the nations, to whom they preached the gospel; a church that was established, and continues to subsist in spite of the fury of persecutions, and the seduction of heretics: a work that is divine in itself, divine in its execution, divine in its propagation, and its preservation.

Finally, the law of nature points out to me in Christianity, the true characters of religion: the homage of the mind paid to God, in the mysteries which

which I am ordered to believe; the homage of the heart in the morality which I am enjoined to practise: a morality every way holy, that in no respect derogates from the law of nature, but perfects it in all its branches: an homage of the whole man, both as to soul and body, in the worship which is exacted of me, in the positive precepts which are laid upon me, and in the exteriour practices which are prescribed me.

A religion made for man, in what light soever he can be viewed, righteous or guilty, king or subject, rich or poor; in all ages, in all conditions, and in all situations in life; dictating to all their duties, and preserving the right of every individual; the support of the indigent, the protection of the weak, the comfort of the afflicted: the strongest and safest tie of society; and
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were it universally and faithfully practised, it would banish from the world every vice, and introduce every virtue, and would only leave such imperfections and miseries, as are suitable to the exercise of Christianity, patience and humility.

XVIII.

Men fall into sin, when through an unruly inclination to sensible advantages, which are in the lowest rank of pleasure, they renounce those that are more exalted and of the first rank. God is truth and his law. Book 2. c. 5.

TH E R E are three classes of good things; God, and the means that lead to him; the soul of man and its faculties; all sensible objects, such as our body, and all other bodies, which exist only with a relation to ours. Those of the first class are the most excellent;

excellent; those of the last, the least estimable; the soul holds the middle rank; it is good or bad, as it adheres to that which is above it, or to that which is beneath it.

God does not forbid us the enjoyments of any of the sensible things which he has created, since it is for us that he has created them, that is, for the use of our body, and of this present life. But he does not, and cannot allow us to attach ourselves to these things for their own sake, that we should make them our end, that we should stop at, and rest in them; because they are beneath us, and because in fact, it is a motive of humiliation for us to be united to a body, and to hold to other material beings by means of this body. Our soul is destined to a far nobler end, and to those advantages that lead to this end. God himself, the sovereign good, the author

thor of all that is good, is its end; it is made to enjoy him for ever. The good things by which it is forwarded towards this enjoyment, are all moral and religious virtues.

As our soul is spiritual and immortal, it is evident that the things which it can reach to of itself, and independently of the body, must be the most analogous to its nature. Such is God, who is through his essence increated and immortal: our soul, therefore, is made for God.

Hence, as there is a natural subordination between the soul and the body, and between the faculties of the one, and the qualities of the other; so also is there a subordination, between the things that appertain to the soul, and those that regard it only relative to the body. Besides, as this present life, which is transitory and momentary, bears no proportion with
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the life to come which is endless and eternal; so the things of this present life, are of a nature incomparably inferior to those of the life to come.

God, who is order itself, has therefore placed an order between the things which he has destined for the benefit of man: appointing that this order should rule his estimation and affections: God appoints that he should set a greater value on what belongs to the soul, than that which appertains to the body, on what relates to the life to come, than what concerns the present, and that in the concurrence, he should not hesitate to sacrifice inferiour and perishable objects, in order to secure the possession of superior and eternal advantages; and as God is the supreme, the incomparable, the final happiness of man, and as he eminently comprehends every thing that is desirable it is evident

that man ought never to expose himself to the danger of losing so great a blessing, by preferring any thing else to it, or even by comparing it with any thing else; and at all times to be disposed to lose all other advantages, in order to attain this. The same reason obliges him to give the preference over all earthly things, to those which are of a moral and supernatural order, such as all virtues are, the proper effect of which is, to unite him to God, even during his abode upon earth.

Such is the rule: a most just, holy, and immutable rule, which is grounded on the very nature of things. As man is free in his choice, he may violate this rule; but should he violate it, he goes against order, and he sins. The malice of the sinner consists in knowing the justice of this order, and in voluntarily transgressing it; he inverts the established law of God, and for an
inferiour

Inferiour advantage which his passions propose to him, he makes no account of his sovereign good: and this is at once the excess of blindness and of injustice.

God punishes him by depriving him in effect for ever, of the blessing of which he freely runs the risk of being deprived of, and by taking from him, after this life, the things which he went after, to the prejudice of this sovereign good. He also punishes him by inflicting on him sensible evils, which surpass without any comparison all the pleasures which he enjoyed by means of his senses; and by rendering his soul a prey to all the bitterness and lacerations of rage and despair. A chastisement of infinite equity, which punishes man in that in which he had sinned, and subjects him, against his will, to the order which he had violated.

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What then must we do? We must regulate our judgments and affections according to truth, according to the law of God; we must subject ourselves to the order which he has established; we must never suffer our passions so to prevail over us, as to cause us to transgress it. I do not exact that you should imitate the saints, who felt themselves humbled by the weight and the wants of this mortal body, who groaned under it, who granted nothing but to its necessities, and refused every thing to its pleasures. This seems to you to be too severe; you do not conceive what freedom, what independence, what peace resulted from it.

Enjoy, therefore, the things of this life, but no further than God permits you, according to the measure, the bounds, and conditions which he has prescribed. Let this enjoyment be

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but superficial, and let your heart be fixed only upon the things that are solid, and that claim all your affection. Reason will have it so, religion commands it; your happiness both temporal and eternal depends upon it. Your passions alone oppose it; but should they be listened to? And is there a momentary satisfaction of so great a value, as that you should sacrifice to it the peace of your conscience, and your interest for eternity? Do not wait for the life to come, in order to see into the folly and disorder of such a conduct. It then would be too late, a repentance would be vain, and the evil irreparable.

XIX.

*All who stray from thee, and who rise up
against thee, imitate thee perversely.*

Book 2. c. 6.

ST. Austin taking a view of all the passions, shews that the end that man proposes to himself, is to give himself a kind of existence which belongs only to God: so that even when he strays from him, and rises up against him, he strives to imitate him, but with a false and perverse imitation. From whence he concludes that this alone is a proof, that God is the Creator of all beings, and that for this very reason, they cannot entirely withdraw themselves from him.

Nothing is more true, nothing is more profound, than this admirable thought. It ascends to the principle of moral evil, which is pride, and an inordinate

inordinate desire in the intelligent creature, of being equal to the Creator. What ruined the rebel angel? This sentiment which scripture puts in his mouth, *I will exalt myself, and I shall be like unto the Highest*. He aspired to independence, and to be able to say, as God does; I am of myself, from myself I hold all my perfection. Man in like manner lost himself, by wishing to resemble God; it was in this that Satan tempted him and seduced him, *you will be like unto gods, knowing good and evil*.

In his degradation man still retains this perverse desire of imitating God; a desire which is even become more violent by his fall; and this is the intimate object, and the ultimate end of all his passions. He wishes to be as independant as God; he wishes for the enjoyment of all that is pleasurable, and the exemption from all that

is painful; he is impatient of controul, and spurns at contradiction, as if subjection and pain did not appertain to his nature: he refers all to himself, and makes himself the centre of every thing.

This desire, disorderly and absurd as it is, proves, however, his greatness and his dignity. It proves that he is created to the image of God, and destined to resemble him one day after a more perfect manner, when he has rendered himself worthy of the possession of him. *We shall be like unto him,* says St. John, *because we shall see him such as he is.* It is in this resemblance that his happiness will be found.

Hence the true happiness of man, and his resemblance with God, being one and the same thing, it is in some sort natural that the passions, which propose happiness to themselves for their object, should also have in view
this

this resemblance. But as the happiness which they aspire to is false, the resemblance which they affect to give us with God, is false also. The fault of the passions is not in the desire of happiness, nor in the pretension to resemble God; it is in the search of happiness out of God, notwithstanding his express prohibition, in the fruition of created things, and in the desire of imitating God, not in the participation of his being, but in rising up against him, and withdrawing themselves from his dominion. From hence springs their vanity, as well as their crime. They are vain because they deceive us, by never attaining to their object; they are criminal, because they invert order, and tend to a resemblance with God, which offends the sovereignty of his being.

That which sensibly shews that the object of the passions is a perverse imitation

imitation of God is, that they all bear a false character of infinity. They wish that their object were infinite, that the pleasure of enjoyment were also so, and that there were no end to their possession. Which is evidently to say, that our passions induce us to seek in things created that which is in God alone, an infinite good, an infinite joy, and an infinite possession.

But what God finds only in himself, he will have us also seek in him alone: and such is the sublimity of our destination; this is what he has engraved in our heart with indelible characters. Man, by taking his passions for his guides, goes in search out of God, of what is only to be found in God, and this is his error, his crime, and his misery. An error that debases him, degrades him and brutifies him: a crime that corrupts, disorders and perverts his nature, and the use of his faculties:

faculties: a misery that deprives him, even in this life, of the hope of a sovereign felicity, and will rob him for ever of the possession of it.

Let us imitate God: let us endeavour to bear a resemblance with him, but only in the manner in which he would have man imitate and resemble him. The resemblance which is to be one day our reward and our happiness, does not become our present state, it is reserved for a state of glory. Another kind of resemblance is proposed to us here below: it is to imitate Jesus Christ. The Son of God became man: he dwelt amongst us in order to shew us, in his doctrine, in his actions, and in his sufferings, a model truly divine; and an imitation of which might be within our reach. It is not to our passions, but to our reason, and to our faith that this model is presented. Whosoever shall form himself on the
image

image of the Son of God, expressing in himself his sentiments and his virtues, will one day be like unto him in glory. On the contrary, whosoever shall have no conformity with this model, will never partake of his felicity.

Let each one, therefore, examine himself, and ask; have I hitherto taken this God-man for the object of my imitation? I am a Christian; I glory in the name. But what is a Christian but an imitator of Jesus Christ? I am instructed in his gospel, I know what he has taught, what he has practised, what he has ranked amongst the beatitudes, and what he has condemned. If I do not resemble him in sentiment and in action, what must I expect, when he will judge me, and confront me with himself. What will be my lot, but an eternal reprobation?

XX.

Who is the man, who reflecting on his weakness, dares to ascribe to his own strength, his chastity and his innocence.

Book 2. c. 7.

ST. Austin with reason judged on his head of others from himself. He knew all his own weakness, of which he had made a fatal essay; and he knew that this weakness is natural to man, that he is prone to evil, and averse to what is good, and that of himself he has not strength to avoid the one, or to practise the other. The thing is true, even morally speaking. The virtuous Pagans were not purely so; and if they overcame any vice, they overcame it through vicious motives, that were infected with pride and self-love.

But

But what our faith teaches us, confirms this truth more forcibly. We are taught by it that all the supernatural good which is in us, is due to grace, that of ourselves we can do nothing, that we are not capable even of one good thought, or of one good desire, with respect to our last end. Every child of the church professes the belief of this doctrine, which is the foundation of christianity, humility, and of the gratitude we owe to God. But it is one thing to believe with a speculative faith, and another in practice to conform our sentiments with this belief, so as to glorify God in all we see that is good in us, and never to imagine that we have in the least contributed towards it by our own endeavours.

How rare are the souls who are habitually in this interior disposition! Where are those to be found, who continually

tinually carry in their heart, an intimate conviction of their weakness and impotency? It can only be the effect of a long, or rather a constant experience.

Now I can hardly discover more than two sets of people, who have this experimental knowledge of their misery: the one is of those, who, before they gave themselves totally to God, or since they have returned to him, have fallen into some considerable fault, the remembrance of which being always present to their mind, cures them of presumption, and keeps them solidly humble: such were David, Peter, Magdalene, Austin, and many others: the other is of those who have always lived with great purity and innocence, but whom God has tried with great and violent temptations; whom he has led a hundred times to the brink of the precipice, into which they

they know they would have infallibly fallen, if the all-powerful hand of God had not supported them; those also who in the most perfect service of God, have hardly ever experienced either relish or consolation; who have met with nothing but dryness, aridities and reluctance to what is good, and have been in continual conflicts with the rebellions of depraved nature.

All such servants of God, whose number is small, if compared with the others, have been truly humble, have been deeply penetrated with a sense of their misery, and of their incapacity of doing any thing that is good. A man who has the advantage of knowing himself in this manner, should he overcome any passion, or acquire any virtue, is very far from ascribing the merit of it to himself; he gives all the glory of it to God alone. He
does

does ^{not} prefer himself to any one, not even to the greatest sinners; persuaded as he is that if they had received the same graces which he has received, they would have made a better use of them than he has done; and that if he himself had been in the same circumstances with them, he would have been more wicked than they. Thus thought St. Paul, who stiled himself the first of sinners, and said, whatever I am, I am through the grace of God.

Thus thought St. Austin, who acknowledged that there is no sin, which any one man can commit, but what every other man might commit, if not preserved from it by the grace of God.

Thus thought St. Francis, who sincerely believed himself to be more guilty in the sight of God, than a criminal whom he once saw going to execution. We have a difficulty in conceiving how these sentiments could

be in the saints; we look upon them as pious exaggerations. But it is because we know not as they did, the great corruption and the extreme infirmity of man: it is because we have not humility: a virtue which does not consist, as it is generally reckoned, in placing ourselves beneath what we are, but in doing ourselves the exactest and the strictest justice.

As to those who are pure and innocent, but of an ordinary virtue; who are not addicted to prayer, and to an interior life; who have not gone through humiliating trials; they reflect but little on their weakness; they even have but an imperfect knowledge of it; they are therefore, apt to presume on their own strength, and to applaud themselves for their goodness, as if they had acquired it by their own industry and fidelity: and it would be well if they did not magnify in their
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own fancy, the little goodnes they do, and imagine that they have virtues, which they really have not.

From hence it happens that they are full of self-love, self-sufficiency, of esteem for themselves, and of a secret contempt for others, with whom they compare themselves with complacency: and are moreover so blind, that the greatest part of them will not know their own portrait which I here set before them. They think themselves capable of every thing; they never hesitate at any thing, and enterprize all things. Yet they are cowardly, timid, and pusillanimous, and are for ever in a tremble on their own account. The smallest fault they commit, frets and disheartens them: they cannot imagine, do they say, how they came to fall. What pride! What supine ignorance of themselves! At the first shock of the slightest temptation, you

see them disconcerted, dejected, and on the point of laying every thing aside. It is because they rely on themselves, and not on grace.

They are humble only in words and in the exterior; inwardly they are ruled by a disguised, subtle pride, which blinds them to their own faults, and renders them very clear sighted in the discovery of those of others. They criticise and detract; and in their zeal, they are harsh and severe; they are forbidding to sinners, as if they should say to them, approach me not, for I am pure.

These same people are extremely selfish, and much attached to their own will and judgment; they are active, bustling, and restless; they are fond of works that attract notice, and of exterior practices of piety. You must not speak to them of the mortification of the heart, or of a peaceable and quiet

quiet prayer: in this their self-love would not find its account. Unless they move their lips, they think they do not pray; their heart is dry, they must draw all from their books. In their notions, mortification consists in the practice of some fasts, some abstinence, or some corporal austerity. And we may easily guess how much they prefer themselves interiourly to those, who lead an ordinary sort of a life. But to curb the reflections of the mind, to moderate the activity of the will, to restrain the imagination, to suppress the sallies of humour, is what they have not the courage to do, nor yet the design of undertaking. But what would such people think, if, on being told that their sanctity depended much more upon the action of God, than upon their own, they were advised to rest upon him the chief care of it, to allow him to act, to give

themselves up to him, and to submit to his operations? These are so many things of which they have no conception, or they treat them as idle and illusive.

These people, adds St. Austin, have less love for God, than converted sinners have, because the mercy by which God pardons sin, has been less necessary to them; as if the grace which preserves, were less valuable than the remedy which cures, and as if they were not as much, and even more indebted to God's goodness on that very account. The case is, that at bottom, they imagine that their justice belongs to themselves, and that it is, if not entirely, at least in great measure their own work; and on this they rest their hope, instead of placing it solely in God; who, when he crowns our merits, crowns but his own gifts.

XXI.

O too pernicious friendship! O seduction of the mind, when we say the one to the other, let us go, let us do; and when we blush at not being impudent. B. 2. c. 9.

THUS does St. Austin express himself, on account of a theft which he committed with his companions at the age of sixteen. This theft had nothing in it that was attracting: it was of a fruit that was unfit for eating, and his own garden furnished him with better. He owns that, had he been alone, he would not have thieved: and he ascribes this larceny to the seduction by which young people mutually encourage each other in evil doings.

What happened to that great saint, still happens daily. Men corrupt, seduce

duce and pervert each other: every thing concurs towards it; example, persuasion, and timidity; the boldness and instigation of some, and the weakness and compliance of others. The contagion catches and spreads itself like fire.

We all carry within us a certain fund of malice, which is not equal in every one, but more or less differs according to the mixture of our natural qualities. This fund is the principle of our corruption; but that which hastens the unfolding of this bud, and carries us sometimes to the greatest crimes, are mostly our bad connections, and our engagements in company. Man, when alone, cannot be either as good, or as bad as he can be. It is a commerce with others, especially his equals, that bends him to virtue or to vice. The best education, the most virtuous dispositions, the strongest resolutions

solutions can hardly hold against the seduction of bad company: we must either of necessity quit it, or presently consent to be perverted. The mischief is already half done, when we remain in it after we have known what it is.

For to imagine that we shall be able to guard against the contagion; that we shall go no further than to a certain point; that we shall resist the counsels, the examples, the railleries, the fear of disobliging, and a certain proneness to an imitation of what we see done by others, that we shall support ourselves on all these numerous and slippery occasions, through a firmness of character, a rectitude of intention, through the fear of God and the secret admonitions of our own conscience, is an illusion. We possibly may hold good for a while, but we must slip back, and finally must yield.

yield. *He that loves danger, will perish in it.*

Now there is no danger more imminent, more certain, and more unavoidable than this. All the world knows it, and hardly any one guards against it. So little is the account that is made of virtue and innocence! Parents themselves are not sufficiently cautious on this head in behalf of their children. From hence arises that deluge of every species of crimes that overflows society. Let people say what they will, human laws are insufficient to maintain order either in public or domestic life. The whole depends on religion and morals; and the religion and morals of every individual depend, more than on any thing else, on his connections and friendships.

With the wicked we learn wickedness; we harden in the commission of

we yield we lose it:

it: we learn to boast of it, and to shake off a certain shame that is attached to evil deeds: we even learn to brag of the evil we have not done, and aim at being esteemed more wicked than we really are. St. Austin says so of himself; how many could have made, or may make the same confession?

Do remorse arise, do we mean to return to a virtuous course? The main obstacle that intervenes does not always proceed from our passions and vicious habits. But we are to renounce our friends, our confidants, our companions of pleasure and intrigue. This often stops us. We indeed repent of the steps we have taken, but are unwilling to draw back. At the least attempt of the kind, at the least regret which we might express, their looks disconcert us; their reproaches, their derisions, and their scornful pity overset us; we yield, we link more closely with

with them, and become worse than before.

Often, nay too commonly in our days, these dangerous and perfidious friends beset us even on our death-bed, and try every measure to frustrate the effects of grace in those last moments; we perceive that they mean our perdition, but know not how to avoid it. They lay fast hold of us and beset us, they conceal the danger of our sickness, and prevent every spiritual assistance. Thus do thousands quit this world, with a racked conscience, affecting a false security, and not daring to give any sign of repentance.

It is particularly in bodies of men, and in communities of any kind, where the influence of good or bad society is the most perceptible. In every body of men there is a prevailing spirit that serves for rule throughout the whole, and to which every particular, on becoming

coming a member, conforms his conduct. He must think, say, and act according to the maxims of the body, according to its prejudices and customs: if you stand up against them, you will be excluded, or rejected, or looked upon unfavourably; you will be despised, and possibly also persecuted.

The bulk of mankind are neither decidedly good nor decidedly wicked: they are weak and are easily led away: they have no opinion of their own, and follow that which they find already established; like the camelion, they assume the colour of what is nearest to them, and of what surrounds them. The policy, the interest, the fear, the vanity, the ascendancy of certain characters subdues them; the example and authority have all power over them, they are not strong enough to resist the torrent. How then if alone, or in a small number, will they dare to condemn

demn the greater number, and give it the law? We think ourselves fully justified when we can say, I follow the spirit of the body I belong to.

It is therefore of the utmost consequence to morals, probity, faith and salvation, to be well acquainted with the dispositions, the maxims, and the customs of the body we mean to become members of: should they be good, the facility of doing and living well will be great; should they be bad, nothing less than a miracle will preserve you.

The precautions which are necessary to escape the danger of unhappy connections depend partly on ourselves, and partly on Providence. We should pray that God would watch over us, and preserve us from all commerce and engagements that might prejudice our soul; it is one of the greatest blessings which he can bestow on us; nor can

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we sufficiently persist in the demand ; and the surest way to obtain it is to abandon ourselves to his guidance, and never to form a scheme, or enter upon a project independently of him.

On our part we should carefully avoid every suspicious connection ; we never should engage in any state or condition where our salvation may be in danger ; and if the engagement be not irrevocable, we should immediately break through it : we should renounce all employs, dignities and societies either of business or of amusements, where we should evidently be exposed to the loss of our soul. I know that sometimes the situation may be critical, and even cruel ; but the consideration of salvation should take place before every other ; and rather than partake of injustice, rather than hazard our faith and morals, there is no temporal interest that should not be sacrificed.

XXII.

*I did not yet love, and I desired to be
loved; and through a secret indigence
I was angry at being less indigent.*

B. 3. c. 1.

THE origin of the passions, and particularly of that of loving and of being loved, is a hidden want, a secret indigence which begins to be felt at a certain age, and which, at the sight of sensible objects, solicits the soul to unite itself to them, or to attract them to itself, in order to assuage this kind of an intestine hunger that torments it. The soul, as yet raw and unexperienced, is charmed at experiencing this want, because it expects to find, in every object that strikes it, enough to satisfy it. An evident proof is this that no intelligent creature can suffice

to itself, and that it must seek its happiness in some external object.

And from whence proceeds this want? from whence originates this self-sufficiency? unless it be from its having the quality of a creature which carries within it its own nothingness, an immense void which it wishes to fill up, and which nothing can fill, but he who gave it existence. This is the more hidden and latent indigence of which St. Austin speaks. An indigence which constitutes the moral essence of the creature, and which we cannot sufficiently dive into, in order to become acquainted with the intimate relation which we have with God.

The soul has two leading desires which include all other desires. The desire of knowing, and the desire of loving; there must be an object for the understanding, and an object for the will. These desires necessarily car-

ry it to something that is distinct from itself, because it cannot find either in the knowledge or in the love of itself any thing that fills it. Nay, because it knows itself, it feels that it is made for the knowledge of something else; and because it loves itself, it has a desire of loving some other object.

God alone has in himself where-withal to satisfy himself in these two vast desires; or more properly speaking, he does not experience them, because they are always filled with the knowledge and with the love of his infinite essence. He can give to intelligent creatures a desire of knowing and of loving: but God, as he is, his power does not reach so far, as to give to a being, that is drawn from nothing, the capacity of filling this desire, with the knowledge and the love of itself. Hence it is that the creature seeks out of itself, what it does not find in itself.

But

But where would God have it seek for that which can satisfy this desire? No where but in himself, because he alone can fully satisfy it. Did we but reflect a little, and sound the bottom of our mind and heart, we should soon discover that no other knowledge than that of God, no other love than that of God, is capable of satisfying us, because our desire of knowledge and love is boundless, and only can rest in an object that is infinite. As long as man confines himself to creatures, so long will his mind be curious, so long will his heart be inconstant.

Become a slave to his senses since original sin, he is a long while before he knows or loves any thing but through their channel. Hence he grows gradually habituated to attend only to sensible objects. His reason, that is wrapt up in corporeal organs, sees but confusedly and as through dark clouds the
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objects that are spiritual; with pain and difficulty does it reach them, and when it does, it cannot long sustain the sight of them. The imagination, the passions, the senses, which are for ever active, and the continual wants of the body, immediately calls us back to material objects, and invite us to take notice of them, to love them and to seek our happiness in them. And this is the source of all our agitations, of our inconstancy, and of our real misery. But with all our knowledge of, and with all our love for these things, we still continue in our indigence, in our thirst after them, and in our primitive emptiness; and consequently we are for ever restless, for ever greedy after fresh knowledge and new attachments, roving from one object to another, in the vain hope of finding one at last in which we can rest contented.

How

How tormenting must such a life be! and yet it is the life of all mankind, exclusive of those, who preferably to every thing else, give themselves to the knowledge and to the love of God. These find in him rest to their mind and heart. Not that their desire is fully satiated, it cannot be so here upon earth, where God is but obscurely known and imperfectly loved. But in the first place, they have a firm hope that this desire will one day be sated; and this calms and cheers them. In the second place, the little they know of God in this life, and the spark of love which they have for him, suffice to fix their desire, and engage them to condemn every other object. Lastly, this knowledge and love incessantly increase; the more they desire to know and to love God, the more do they know and love him. Their peace and serenity of mind, the command which

they have over themselves, their indifference to all natural curiosity, and to all human attachments, plainly prove that nothing is wanting to them, that they are satisfied with their present condition, and that peaceably sighing after the eternal possession of God, they taste in their exile all the happiness they wish for.

XXIII.

*With joy I suffered myself to be chained
with painful shackles, to be beaten with
rods of iron burning with jealousy,
suspicions, fears, rage and quarrels.*

B. 3. c. 2.

IS this then the picture of the most agreeable, the most pleasing, and the most engaging of passions? Of that passion, the idea of which is set forth in so flattering a light, and to which
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the happiness of life is affixed? But how? its shackles are a source of vexation, and of bitter sorrows! Those who are captives and slaves to it, are beaten with rods of red hot iron. Its retinue are jealousy, suspicions, fears, rage and quarrels. Yes, this is the picture of love: a picture so much the more faithful, as love is the stronger, and the more master of the heart. Thus has it been painted by those who were the best acquainted with it. Poets, philosophers, and other profane authors as well as Christian writers, agree in representing it as a passion that is the most violent, the most dreadful, the most mischievous, and the most tragical. All the histories, all the great events of human life, all that happens in the heart of families, give testimony to the truth of this portrait.

St. Austin has not overcharged it. He has not even expressed those features which are the most capable of exciting a due horror of it. He has not said that this passion was the ruin of the health, the fortunes, the honour and the virtue of its unhappy victims; that it was the scourge of domestic peace, of conjugal union, of the most holy duties of nature; that it divided parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and friends; that it always has been the chief cause of all the crimes that are in the world, and of the misfortunes of states and of particulars. Had he said all this, he would not have said too much, and nothing but what is attested by the experience of every age.

This is what love is, viewed only as to this present life, and with reference to its influence on the happiness of society. But what if we consider it
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through the medium of religion, and relatively to the last end of man? Is there a passion that extinguishes in him more absolutely the light of his reason and of his faith; that saps more powerfully morality and piety; that hardens more the heart to God; that gives greater loose to profanation and sacrilege, that leads more directly to irreligion, and drags more souls into eternal damnation?

And yet young people, blind and unruly, throw themselves with joy into this abyfs of evils; they hasten to form connections which are to imbitter their life, and from which, perhaps, they never will be disengaged. The first effect of this baneful passion, is to deafen those whom it possesses to all admonition, to render them incapable of reflection, and to shut their eyes to every kind of danger to which they expose themselves. And, what is hardly credible,

dible, all that this passion produces that is sad, sorrowful, dismal and desperate, nay atrocious, black and sanguinary, when it is exposed with art in theatrical pieces and in romances, is a charm that ravishes the soul, and marks it with the deepest impressions. It begins only to be well known, if at all it should leave room for reflection, when the heart is deep in the precipice into which the unwary plunge themselves through attraction, and continue to remain in it through a despair of getting out of it.

At all times philosophy has been employed in finding out remedies for this passion. But what has it proposed? the followers of Aristippus and Epicurus have tried to detach the sentiment, and reduce the passion to the pure nature of it: they have pretended to satisfy the animal instinct, without engaging the heart; they have advised the

the enjoyment, in forbidding the attachment: in a word, they have substituted a lewdness that promiscuously tends to the first object, for a love that stops at, and fixes upon one. This remedy invented by a philosophy that is devoid of principle and shame, this remedy more dangerous than the evil itself, and which is nothing less, than an excess of dissolution and debauchery, has been almost every where the most adopted, the most authorised and the most practised.

Other philosophers have proposed the study of the sciences and of letters; some, bodily exercise: others to fight against this passion by means of another. Some again have imagined that to get free from this passion, it is sufficient to view it in its worst light, and seriously to consider its dismal consequences. These may be useful as preservatives, but as remedies, they
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are vain and ineffectual, as the patient has neither the will, or oftentimes the power to make use of them. And who are those who have been cured by them? If any can be named, the number is but small.

Nothing but the true religion, the fear of God, the consideration of eternal truths, the frequent use of the sacraments, and the constant practice of deeds of piety, can furnish infallible means of preventing this evil, or of being freed from it. The tribunal of penance is a sovereign remedy; and the neglect of this, is the cause of the present general corruption. An humble and sincere acknowledgment of our faults moves the heart of God, and prepares the soul for conversion. A docility to salutary admonitions, the shunning of occasions, prayer, alms-deeds, penitential works, holy communion, are great prefer-

preservatives against relapses. There is no passion so strong, no habit so inveterate that can hold against grace; when we have recourse to, and when we expect all from God, and nothing from ourselves. The point is, to be seriously desirous of a cure, and to take those steps that are indispensably necessary for that purpose. Then the difficulties would soon lessen, and presently vanish, and it would clearly appear, that what is impossible to man, is easy with God, when we address ourselves to him with confidence and perseverance.

XXIV.

I was passionate for theatrical pieces, that are quite full of the images of my miseries, and calculated to add fuel to my fire. Book 3. c. 1.

IF young people of both sexes were as sincere as St. Austin, they would acknowledge, that that which inspires them with so keen a taste for plays, is the hidden disposition of their heart, which goes in search of nourishment for its passion. Aristotle, merely to contradict Plato his master, would have it that the theatre corrected the passions. This was not true, even in his time, when tragedy was much more grave, and more moral than it is with us. And as to the ancient comedy, I cannot think that Aristotle ever meant to protect it, as it was
obscene

obscene to a great degree, most scandalous and satyrical.

Be that as it will, our stage is by no means fitted to correct the passions, particularly that of love. I am fully convinced, that if love were absolutely banished from our stages, play-houses would be nearly abandoned. There must be some sort of love, either gross for the vulgar, or delicate for people of fashion. To this pitch are our manners wound up! Corneille, whose genius led him to very different objects, was forced to accommodate himself to it; the same is to be said of Racine, though his taste and desire was to imitate the purest age of antiquity, that forms the danger of our stages; and that is the chief reason why they are proscribed by Christian morality.

The stage in general is the school of the world, and consequently it is an antichristian school. There the world presides,

presides, and assembles its votaries and followers; there does it read its lessons, which of themselves are by far too seducing, and seasons them with every art that is productive of the highest relish. Whosoever acknowledges Jesus Christ for his master, should not put footing into this school; if he does, he forgets, at least for the moment, that he is a Christian: and gives to those who are such, a just subject of scandal.

For after all, what morality does the stage deliver? A morality that is entirely conformable to the maxims of the world, and directly contrary to those of the gospel; a morality that is favourable to all the passions; any other morality would be hissed. Love, ambition, and revenge are the great engines of tragedy. Comedy attacks if you will the ridicule of characters; but it avowedly declares itself, in fa-

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vour of vices which it encreases, palliates and even protects. A severity in morals is held out as a rudeness, and as an ignorance of good breeding. A boundless indulgence is exacted of parents to children, and from husbands to their wives. Worthy people are disguised into fools, and are laughed at when intriguing and cunning knaves make them their dupes. As to operas, no one is ignorant that the sole object of its morality is the love of pleasure, and that it teaches voluptuousness down to insipidity and disgust.

This is not the only danger that attends plays. That which results from the players themselves is equally great. Comedians vitiate morals as much by their personal conduct, and by the use which they make of their talents and artifices, as the parts they perform. A woman particularly that appears on

the stage, what is she better than a prostitute, that puts up to auction her youth and her charms, and seeks to excite in others, the passions which she exhibits? It is a well averred fact, that soon after comedians have settled themselves in any town, the morals of the people are no more the same, and that the youth that hears them and frequents them is corrupted.

But the chief danger to the spectators, comes from the spectators themselves. The exclamations, the applauses, the derisions of the multitude, and so many decisions on what pleases, or displeases the world; and these decisions make the deepest impressions on tender and unexperienced minds. It is there where they learn how formidable the world is in its approbations and its censures; what it esteems,
and

and what despises, what charms it, and what shocks it.

It is certain, that plays are of the greatest consequence in regard to morals and Christian piety. Those who frequent them expose, and almost always lose both the one and the other. If they no longer run any risk, it is because the mischief is done already. I will not pretend to determine what sort of a crime it is, to assist at such representations. A decision of this nature, in order to be just, should be personal: attention must be had to I do not know how many particular circumstances. I only say in general, that a virtuous and conscientious soul, will always consider the stage, as one of the most immediate occasions of sin; as a great obstacle to salvation; as a public scandal in the church; as a snare laid to entrap innocence and piety; as the triumph of the world, the

enemy of Jesus Christ, and as the reign of the passions.

The most natural idea that we can form of the theatrical assemblies, is to judge of them from the opposition that intervenes between them, and those assemblies where people resort to hear the word of God. The attractive that leads to the one, is quite contrary to the motive that leads to the other. As much as the character of the preachers of the gospel is respectable and sacred, so much is that of comedians despicable and profane. What is recited and sung on the stage, contradicts in every point, the holy truths that are preached in churches. We come from a good sermon with a desire of becoming better; we come from a stage with a secret aversion to all that is pious and good; with a relish for luxury, vanity, and dissipation; with passions that are set in motion and
ready

ready to catch fire. If we be not always decided in favour of virtue, when we have heard a sermon, we are at least moved and affected by it; and the good effect which one sermon has prepared, may be produced by some others. In like manner though the heart may not at first step over to the party of vice, at the issue of a stage performance; yet it acquires a stronger propensity to embrace it; and what one performance has begun, a few more will finish. Lastly, as an eagerness to nourish our souls with the word of God, is one of the least equivocal signs of solid devotion, so a passion for the stage is an infallible proof of a dissipated and worldly mind, that is taken up with the things of the earth, and devoid of relish for those of heaven.

XXV.

There are men who seduce by philosophy, colouring and glossing their errors with this name in itself so great, so alluring, and so noble. Book 3. c. 4.

AS all sciences have had their masters and their doctors, so also have they had their mountebanks: and we may say, that those sciences that are the most interesting to man, have been the most employed to deceive him. Philosophy, which by excellence is the science of man, has been more exposed to this abuse than any other. There have been estimable philosophers who have loved truth, who honestly sought for it, who desired to find it, first with the view of making it the rule of their own conduct, and then with that of teaching it to others: and who had besides all that penetration

tration of mind, that is necessary to discover it. But their number has always been very small, if compared with that of false philosophers, who have applied themselves to this study, through vanity or interest; with the view of appearing, rather than of being wise; or even who assuming this fine title, have made an open war upon wisdom and truth.

Among the Greeks, who had so much and so long cultivated philosophy, if we except a few, whose genius and good sense we cannot help admiring, though they were not exempt from errors, and even very gross ones, all the others were mountebanks.

Some of them sought for nothing but to dispute upon every thing, to eclipse truth more and more, and to overset every thing without establishing any thing. Such were the Pyrrhonians,

nians, the Sceptics, the Academics: a set of impostors, who had nothing else in view, but to puzzle the other sects; to ensnare them with their subtle sophisms; to unfold all the resources and wiles of a more ingenious than a rational dialectic, and who would have deservedly been deemed so many fools, had they been thought to have been persuaded in earnest of their doctrine.

Others, on the steps of Aristippus and Epicurus, abjuring religion and reason, destroying the nature and dignity of man, fixed his final end in the pleasures of the body, and his wisdom in the means of procuring them with the least inconveniency possible. They placed the rule of truth in the senses, and admitted of no principles of things but matter and chance. An excellent philosophy is this, which annuls all morality, which rejects an
intelligent

intelligent cause, and sinks man down to the instinct of beasts!

Some again, and these are the Stoics, were mountebanks of virtue; by dint of overstraining it, they rendered it impracticable; the wise among them, were beings who were inaccessible to all the feelings of humanity: holding their virtue from their own endeavours, independent of every thing, superiour even to the divinity, of which they stood not in need. What a chimera of wisdom! What a monster of pride!

These are the chief sects of the ancient philosophy: these are the productions of human reason when left to itself! The fruits of the leisure, of the researches, and of the sagacity of a nation, that was the most curious, and the most ingenious; to whom we owe the invention, and even the perfection of letters and polite arts: the
systems

systems of the Greeks, and their mistakes on natural philosophy, on morality, on the divine nature and on ours, are without number. The longest life would hardly suffice, to acquire and to give to others, any tolerable rational notion of their absurdities in every kind: and yet we have extant but very small part of their writings which formerly filled whole libraries.

At the birth of Christianity, the philosophers were more mountebanks than ever. This profession was a trade to bring in money; the means to ingratiate themselves with the rich and the great, and to share in their honors and favors. They were spread almost all over the Roman Empire. The Christians had no enemies more spiteful, more violent, more obstinate than they were. Enlightened as they were, it was impossible that they should not have felt the force of the proofs
of

of the Christian religion, but this made them the more vehement in calumniating and persecuting it. They were too proud to submit to its mysteries, and to embrace a morality that only preaches humility.

However as they saw that there must be a religion, they declared themselves in favor of idolatry, and omitted nothing in order to justify it; they openly protected the worship of false gods, whom in their hearts they despised; and were not ashamed to prefer to Jesus Christ the heroes of mythology: and sooner than embrace the religion that was announced to them, a religion, so pure, so holy, and so becoming the dignity of man, they gave into magic, into conjurations of devils, and into the most abominable sacrifices.

All these horrors were in vogue in Julian's time when above half of the
Empire

Empire was Christian; and this prince so much extolled by the false sages of our age, is himself a most striking example of philosophical cheat and imposture. To be convinced of this we need only read his writings, and follow him through the chief tracks of his life, and to reflect, that, from his own confession, he exteriorly professed the Christian religion, which twelve years before he had secretly abjured.

The mixture of the errors of philosophy with the tenets of Christianity, has given birth to most heresies. Their authors would reason, where they should only have believed; they were for conciliating either Plato or Aristotle with the gospel; they renewed the ancient systems, which had been brought forth in the night of Paganism, and which the light of revelation had dissipated. The love of
novelty,

novelty, the itching for distinction, the desire of forming a sect, and of being at the head of a party, seduced them. Philosophical pride represented to them, that it was too humiliating a thing to yield to the authority of the Church, and to interdict reason the examination of our mysteries. From hence have sprung so many errors on the Trinity, on the incarnation, on grace, on predestination, all of them resting on the sophisms of a false dialectic.

But never has the respectable name of philosophy been more abused than in the present century, in order to give full scope to the most monstrous errors. Men destitute of morals, of religion and principle have stepped forth as philosophers, and, under this title, have fancied themselves able enough to fight against and overthrow every truth with impunity.

Had

Had they confined themselves to an attack on the Christian religion, that alone would have been a glaring abuse of philosophy. For dare they to say that the love of wisdom, the love of truth, or the love of virtue, engaged them in the conflict? Is there one amongst them all, to whom the most indulgent charity can ascribe this motive? A Voltaire, a Rousseau, and their fellow mountebanks, were they smitten with the love of what is true, and what is good? Were they ever suspected of any such thing? Is this the idea which they give us of themselves in their writings, which teem with paradoxes, sophisms, calumnies, impostures, and the most fraudulent dissimulations? and which evidently betray an extravagant pride, stubbornness, derision and sarcasm in their authors?

They

They have attacked the Christian religion: but did they in their conscience look upon it as a human invention? No: I boldly say they did not. Had they believed it such, they would not have fought against it with the weapons of falsehood. They would have faithfully produced their proofs; they would have acted with the confidence of men who are sure of their mark, who conceal nothing, because they feel themselves equal to all that can oppose them. Is this their case? Whosoever reads the pro and con, with cool reflection, will not be at a loss to determine. They have been convicted of the most shameful falsifications, of the most glaring contradictions, and the most palpable blunders and ignorance. Did they acknowledge them, or did they retract them? Not in the least: they still went further with the utmost impudence; they never made
any

any rational reply to the works that unmasked their errors and artifices. Voltaire, instead of argument, has recourse to banters and pleasantries; to the grossest injuries, and the most violent and furious transports of passion. Rousseau has but one answer, which is, that he has been misunderstood, that his passages had been maimed, because his whole book had not been quoted, and at the moment in which he insists on having been calumniated, he repeats and more forcibly inculcates the very thing he is accused of.

They have attacked the Christian religion. But have they substituted another? For there must be a religion, and a revealed religion: this sound philosophy demonstrates. They have aimed at destruction, and have erected nothing. It is not owing to them that the human race is not stripped of every idea of religion.

But

But possibly it may be said that they have been the apostles of natural religion. By this, I suppose, is meant the law of nature. For there is no such thing, and no such thing can be, as a natural religion. Natural religion would be that, where reason alone would dictate to man the worship that the Deity demands of him. But the light of reason does not reach so far; the Deists have been forced to own this.

But at least have they been the apostles of the natural law? All of them almost have attacked it as violently as they have the Christian religion. How many Atheists, Materialists, Fatalists, enemies to providence and to free-will? Voltaire makes you as free as your dog! What a zealous defender of the law of nature!

But have they shewn any respect for morality? They have established on

this head the most licentious maxims, which Epicurus and Aristippus durst not have published. They make the apology of voluptuousness to a degree of enthusiasm, and hold it out as the mighty spring of all great actions and virtues. How shocking are their notions of marriage, the foundation of natural society !

But probity—they knew no other than that which is grounded on personal interest : this says every thing : for when personal interest becomes the only rule, candour, honesty and every moral virtue is sapped at the root.

Have they at least spared natural and civil authority, which are the two bases of human society ? Not in the least. They have freed parents from the care of their children, and children from the respect and obedience which they owe to their parents. They have broken every moral tie between
man

man and man; have disengaged them from all kind of yoke, and have left them no other law than that which each one chuses to take up: they have represented all governments as so many free conventions, which subsist for every particular, no farther, than he himself is actually willing to conform to them.

This is the substance of the errors which have been coloured and glossed over with the fine name of philosophy. Has the public been a dupe to this name? or have people been willing to be seduced? An imprudent, a blind and passionate youth, may have been seduced to a certain degree; but people of a riper age, who, contrary to the principles of their education, contrary to their conscience, and contrary to every light of reason and religion, have given into these extravagances, have not fallen victims to seduction. A

love for novelty, vain glory, a corruption of the heart and a pride of the mind cause them to stray.

Our present age has not indeed that solidity of reflection, not that depth of knowledge which we observe in the two foregoing centuries; but, generally speaking, we are too clear sighted to fall into such gross snares, without perceiving them, and without knowing the means to avoid them. And the ablest of our modern philosophers have not been men of parts so transcending as to captivate mankind through the brightness of their genius, the strength of their reasoning, the power of their eloquence, or the dignity of their style. In all these respects, what are they all put together, when compared with a Bossuet?

XXVI.

My pride was disgusted with the simplicity of the holy scripture, and my mind did not penetrate into the depth of it.

B. 3. c. 5.

MOVED with an ardent desire of true wisdom from the reading of a work of Cicero, and unsatisfied with the writings of profane philosophers, because he did not find in them the name of Jesus Christ, which he had sucked in with his mother's milk, Austin fell a reading the holy scripture, in order to come at that wisdom which he was so eagerly in pursuit of. But at the first starting, two things disgusted him from it: he found the style of it to be too simple, habituated as he was to the eloquence of Cicero; and with all his great genius he could not penetrate the sense of it, because he was not in the

necessary dispositions to receive from God the gift of understanding. He therefore despised scripture, because his mind was vain, and his heart corrupted.

These are the two general causes for which these divine books, in which true philosophy is contained, and all that is useful and necessary for man to know, are so little relished even in Christendom. Great and excellent wits, who are passionate for a Plato or a Cicero, cannot bear a page of the holy scripture.

There are some who read it as critics, or as literati, with the view of clearing up matters of history, chronology, or of geography, and comparing the original with the versions, and of acquiring a knowledge of the purity and of the literal sense of the sacred text. But to find out the true, the solid nourishment of the mind and heart,
that

that which lifts man up to God, and leads him to admire the designs of his providence, to study in it the rules of wisdom, and what must be believed and practised in order to attain to true happiness, is what few persons do. We are enraptured with the morality of the Heathens; we admire their wit, their good sense, the elevation of their sentiments; and the doctrine of the gospel seems despicable, both for the thoughts and the manner of expressing them. We blame the book, whilst we ourselves are only to blame; our bad dispositions, our vitiated taste and our want of judgment are the only cause of it.

For, to begin with the style, would it not have been unbecoming the majesty of God to debase himself to the ornaments of human eloquence, to measure and arrange his words and phrases, and to aim at pleasing men by

the rules of an art which they themselves had invented? The more the things which God had to say were elevated, the more interesting they were to man, both on their own account, and on the account of the supreme authority of him who deigned to speak to him: the more the expression should be simple, familiar, and free from all affectation. To every one who is a competent judge, it must be evident that the pompous language of Plato and of Cicero would degrade the sublimity of scripture. Thus judged St. Austin himself, when his mind was riper, and was more enlightened; and despising all the fine precepts of rhetoric, in his writings and his public discourses, he approached, as near as he could, to the simplicity of holy writ.

When once we are convinced that these books have God for their author, we must readily be satisfied that they should

should not have been written differently from what they are. God surely knows after what manner it becomes him to speak; and if nothing comes up to the simplicity of his expressions, it is because nothing comes up to the majesty of his being. He did not chuse that in hearing him we should give attention to the choice and arrangement of words; but that we should be affected merely by the truth, by the grandeur and by the importance of the objects.

As to the thoughts, if the human mind despise them, it can only be so because it does not comprehend them. It is too low to be able to raise itself up to their height, too narrow to measure the extent of them, and too shallow to fathom their depth. Its natural sight cannot reach so far. It must be guided by a divine light before it can penetrate the diverse senses which the
Holy

Holy Spirit has hidden under the letter of the scripture. The Gospel, as well as the Old Testament, which bears a relation to it, is a book that is sealed up, to whosoever has not the eyes of faith; we understand it, we relish it, but in proportion as our heart is pure, as we are humble, and as we are constantly united to God by prayer.

When Austin was entirely converted, and had embraced the practice of the evangelical perfection, he received from above the necessary light for the intelligence of scripture. He read it with a different spirit, and with other eyes, because his heart was no longer the same. He found in it every excellency of reason, every sublimity in the mysteries, and every degree of goodness in its morality. He looked with contempt on the writings of the philosophers, of which he had been once so fond; and he himself only became

became so great a philosopher and so great a theologian, because he penetrated more than any one else into the profundity of these holy books.

Let every one therefore read them with the same respect, and with the same humility, by taking for guide, as he did, the doctrine and tradition of the Church: let us read them with the design of being instructed in what we ought to know for salvation, and for the rule of our conduct. Let us, as St. Austin did, join prayer to our reading; and we shall, each one, suitably to his respective station, and the duties he has to discharge, receive every light that we stand in need of. The difficulties we may meet with, should not dishearten us, because we shall always find matter that is sufficiently clear to nourish and to satisfy our mind; and because what we do not comprehend is either unnecessary, or a
mere

mere object of curiosity, or relates to predictions the eclairciffment of which is reserved for future times.

As to the morality of it in particular, which is the part that is the most interesting to every one, the truth, the beauty and holiness of it are understood no farther than as we advance in the ways of God. The best means therefore to understand it, is to begin by putting in practice what we actually understand; our lights will increase with our piety; and the progress of the mind will keep pace with that of the heart.

XXVII.

They said truth, truth; and were repeating it every where; and the truth was not amongst them. B. 3. c. 6.

THESE great promises of the truth which they did not possess, and
which

which they knew they did not possess, were the Manicheans. The more they knew themselves to be remote from it, the more did they boast that they had it amongst them; and not being able to gain peoples mind by fundamental reasoning, they endeavoured to impose upon them by an air of assurance. This artifice has been practised by all impostors and mountebanks, and though so very trite, it has always succeeded.

Austin was sighing after truth from the bottom of his heart, as he here tells us he did: he was seeking for it with eagerness and solicitude. But how could he possibly find it? He had the presumption to believe that he could discover it of himself: he was seeking for it through the efforts of his own understanding, without calling upon God, and taking him for his guide. He did not seek it in the holy scriptures, the reading of which disgusted him;

him; nor in the documents of the Church to which he then did not belong, not being disposed to believe without reasoning. He was wandering from sect to sect; he was reading whatever came to hand: he was knocking, as it were, at every door to find out the abode of truth.

The Manicheans, the most subtle and the most insidious, the most hypocritical and the most seducing of all heretics, ensnared him into their nets. They assured him, and that with an air that easily persuaded a curious, greedy and unguarded mind, that the truth was among them; they let him into their errors with a great deal of caution, dissimulation and mitigation, feeling, at every step, the ground they stood upon, and, quite absurd and impious as they were, they contrived to give him a relish for them.

They

They started with the profound and difficult question on the origin of evil. Observing him embarrassed with the difficulties which it offered, they pretended to shew him the clear solution of it in the existence of two principles, the one good and the other bad. They completed his seduction by their eloquence, their apparent piety, and the affected severity of their manners. If he was not entirely persuaded, he was a long while in doubt, and with great difficulty did he rid himself of it.

We may be surprized, and with reason, that so bright a genius should have imagined to have perceived truth in a system that is so evidently false in itself, and so ridiculous in the detail of it. But the penetration of Austin's wit was a snare to him on this occasion. He entangled himself in his own reasonings; and the difficulties which clearly occurred, quite overpowered him;

him; not being able to solve them in the supposition of one only principle, he thought he could not but agree to the admission of two.

The wreck of Austin is a lesson to young people, who presuming on their own abilities, take up the idea that of themselves they are equal to the examination of the most subtile and knotty questions, and to the reading of every book in which the great truths of philosophy and religion are attacked with captious sophisms; and who finding themselves overpowered with the difficulties which they meet with, go over to the party of the incredulous, from a notion, that a difficulty which is unanswerable to them, must be equally so to the rest of mankind. What I say of young people, I mean it also of all those who have not sufficiently applied themselves to the study of such matters, and have not stored their mind
with

with a competent share of knowledge. Had each one confined himself within the sphere of his abilities on this head, and done justice to himself, the number of unbelievers would not be so great.

In order to help all such to a discovery of their mistake, I shall here point out some means of distinguishing truth from falsehood, without entering into a discussion of the nature of the things themselves. We all know in general that falsehood and truth have their proper characters; that the one never makes its appearance but in the dress of the other; and that all those who say, the truth, the truth, who boast of being the depositaries of it, who emphatically engage to teach it to others, are justly suspected of not having it on their side of the question. Nevertheless people are not sufficiently guarded against those artifices which

impostors employ to seduce them: and yet did they take any pains to observe and study them, the discovery of them would not be difficult, with the assistance of the following observations.

Be diffident of a sharp, decisive, and an imposing language. Truth is modest, and no ways arrogant: it wishes to command, but with a soft persuasion, and does not subdue with haughtiness. Falsehood, on the contrary, is magisterial, full of pomp and ostentation; it speaks with an air the most affirmative; it tramples under foot all reason and authority that contradicts it, and allows to those who listen to it neither doubt nor discussion.

Be diffident of a flattering, whining and insinuating language: it always conceals some craft, and a design to cheat. Truth sufficing to itself, has not recourse to these mean ways of currying favour with the mind. Its
style

style is manly, firm, and even austere when there is occasion for it; but it does not make use of affectation, or of a feigned meekness.

Be diffident of an enthusiastic and fanatic language, that seeks only to heighten the imagination and to inflame the passions. Truth speaks with energy, but it speaks to reason, it excites, it animates and moves, without standing, mountebank-like, on trestles, and without giving into convulsions and frenzies.

Be diffident of all that presents itself with the apparel and pomp of a vain eloquence. Those discourses that are so elaborate, so dressed, so full of apostrophes and of vehement figures, do not wear the character of truth, which is much less a friend to the art of oratory than falsehood is. Truth, no doubt, has its eloquence, nay nothing is more eloquent than its language;

but this eloquence is natural, simple and unglossed; it flows from principle; it is sublime, because it does not affect being so.

Be diffident of those discourses wherein intricacy, evasions, equivocations, subtle and captious arguments are to be found: wherein nothing is properly unfolded, and in which matters are represented in an obscure, dark manner, and deviate from the received notions among men: all this carries with it the stamp of falsehood, which dares not shew itself openly, nor express itself clearly and simply. Truth is naked; it offers plain and fixed ideas, drawn from good sense, and not from sharpness of wit; it goes straight to its mark, and always openly so; far from seeking darkness, it endeavours to dispel it.

Be also diffident of the language of sarcasm, of irony, of raillery and of
malignity

malignity. Falsehood is sure of its aim, once it begins to amuse and to please; and it pleases by means of some stroke of wit and of humour. But when it is unmasked, it becomes peevish, violent and passionate, it bites and tears to pieces. Truth always is decent, is always grave, yet without sadness, it can play sometimes; but never on serious matters, where religion or morals are concerned. It is candid, ingenuous and averse to all that is satyrical and caustic. It attacks and confutes falsehood, but without contempt, mockery or insult. It powerfully and even warmly defends itself, but is free from bitterness and gall, and all that favours of a vindictive spirit.

You young people whose soul is upright, you who sincerely seek truth, and desire to guard against impostors, apply these rules to those you have

habits of friendship with, and to the books you read. They are so many indisputable marks and diagnosticks, which will teach you to discern rectitude from artifice, candour from dissimulation, and truth from falsehood.

But above all, guard against yourselves. The most dangerous impostors, and the greatest enemies to truth are in your own heart. These are your passions. Whatever flatters them and sets them at liberty, they try to induce you to wish it to be true, and they at last succeed, by making it appear to you that it is so. Whatever restrains or condemns them, they try to lead you to judge it to be wrong. Did they not seduce you within, you would hardly be seduced by external artifices. The seduction at least would neither be very dangerous, or of any duration: the first ray of truth would remove it.

XXVIII.

I was seeking thee by the sense of the flesh.

*But thou wast more profound than all
that is most intimate in me, and su-
perior to all that is most elevated in
me. B. 3. c. 6.*

AUSTIN engaged in Manichæism, thought only of phantoms and corporeal images; and under these images, he represented to himself not only his own soul, but God himself. It was only when grace had converted and enlightened him, that he perfectly understood that his soul was a pure spirit; and that God was not only a spirit, but the spirit of spirits; that he is more profound than all that is intimate in man, and superior to all that in man is the most elevated: that is to say, that God by his intimate presence, penetrates into the very bot-

tom of bodies and souls, and that, from the transcendency of his being, he raises himself infinitely above the height of created intelligences.

Manicheans are now no longer. But how many people, even among Christians are there still left, who are acquainted with nothing real besides corporeal substances, besides that which is seen, and that which is felt; and who find it hard to persuade themselves of the spirituality of their soul, and of that of God? They are all sense, all imagination; they have no ideas; they have only images. Exterior objects strike them, attract and captivate them: they perceive nothing farther. Speak to them of the purest operations of their soul, and of the most disengaged from matter, they do not comprehend you; because they never withdrew themselves from their senses, to reflect on what passes within them.

them. Speak to them of the substantial presence of God in all that exists: tell them that it is in God that they have life, motion and being; they will understand you much less. They have never gone into themselves to find God. When they chance to think of him, their imagination figures him as exterior to them, and remote from them; it does not enter their minds that they exist in him, that all their most hidden thoughts are present to him, and more present than they are to themselves: in a word, that they are entirely surrounded, and entirely penetrated with the divinity; and whilst it raises itself above them by its infinite height, it is intimately united to them by its infinite depth.

If there be a truth that is certain, and demonstrated by the purest light of reason, it is this; since it is a necessary consequence, which arises from
the

the simplicity, and the immensity of the divine substance. Why then is it so difficult to men to convince themselves of it? Why do those who are convinced of it, pay hardly any attention to it? Two reasons may be assigned for it. The first is, as I have said, because most people have no esteem or love, for any thing but for exterior objects, and for that which pleases the senses, the imagination and the passions. And therefore, their soul is wholly bent towards them; it is totally taken up with them, and all its powers are employed in the enjoyment of them. It therefore loses the habit of reflecting on itself, on its own nature, and on its operations; of knowing itself, and of knowing God. It is always out of itself, and consequently out of God. Every spiritual view, every spiritual idea is foreign to it: it is a torment to it

to

to think of it. At last it becomes so carnal, that it persuades itself that it only exists for the body, referring every thing to that, and blending itself with it; it has no love for, and aversion to any thing but for the good things, and to the evils of the present life, which appear to it to be the only desirable things, or the only real evils.

The other reason is, because the thought of the presence of God within us is attended with moral consequences, which are of an immense extent: with consequences which are pleasing, it is true, and comfortable to the virtuous, but are troublesome and painful to the wicked. This witness, who is infinitely clear sighted, whom we carry in our heart, whom nothing escapes in any place, or at any time, of what happens within us, though the most secret, and the most hidden; who severely

verely condemns every evil thought, every evil desire, every evil action; who censures to a word, to a smile, to a wink of the eye: this witness I say, is a troublesome beholder, a vexatious monitor, an awing judge, to whomsoever has not an upright conscience, and aims not at following in all things, the light of reason and of religion.

Most people, therefore, use their endeavours, not to remove this witness, but to rid themselves of the thought of his presence; and because they cannot fly from his inward reproaches, as long as they dwell in their own heart, they carefully shun themselves, and withdraw from their own interior: they stifle every reflection, and flee from every object that may give them any; they even use means to become incapable of any, and deem those moments to be the happiest, which they have spent in idle thoughtlessness

lessness and dissipation. So much do they dread a return to God! They fancy that they are screened from his justice, because they have succeeded to banish him from their thought. As if God could forget us, because we forget him, and cease to be present to us, because his presence troubles and alarms us.

This, nevertheless, is the common error of those, who mean to live at their ease in their sins. An error which they strive at all rates to be persuaded of, and thus seek to deprive themselves of every resource for conversion. For if there be a remedy for their evil, it is only to be found in this salutary thought, which they so assiduously banish. Unfortunate, and infinitely to be pitied, should their endeavours prove successful the remainder of their life!

Are

Are we desirous of quitting the state of sin? Let us habituate ourselves to reflect on ourselves, to listen to God in our conscience, and always to keep the eye of our soul open to the light which he offers us. This light is only odious to us, in as much as we love our distemper: it becomes agreeable the moment we wish for a cure. I venture to say, that we are already more than half converted, when we cease to dread the thought of God, and when we readily admit of what can awaken it in us. This same thought, which is the most efficacious to withdraw us from our disorder, is also the most proper to preserve us from it. Have God constantly present, and you never will sin: for who can be so daring as to sin in the presence of God?

Not only does the thought of God keep us in innocence, it is also the
comfort,

comfort, the peace, and the happiness of life. Few will believe this, because few make the experiment of it. But if any one refuse to credit, what reason and faith teaches him on this head, let him consult those to whom the thought of God is familiar, who nourish themselves with it, and constantly strive never to lose sight of it. If he finds but one, who does not loudly proclaim, that to this he owes the calm, and the serenity of his soul, the support of his weakness, the comfort and the soothing of his pains, the solid joy and happiness, such as can be tasted upon earth; he will then have some excuse for that dreadful forgetfulness of God in which most people live; he may even believe that God is not the sovereign good, and that the human heart is not made for him. For my part, it seems evident to me, that if the clear sight and possession of
God,

God, be the felicity of the next life, the habitual thought of God must be the delight of the present.

XXIX.

Thou takest care of every every one of us, as if he were alone; and thou takest care of all as of every one. Book 3. c. 11.

IF, at the sight of the order that reigns in the universe, and in every one of the parts that compose it, it cannot be denied, without absurdity, that there is a physical providence that has established and maintains this order, and whose attention extends itself to the smallest objects in nature; it is much more absurd not to acknowledge a moral providence, that watches over mankind in general, and over every man in particular.

Infallible

Infalible as this providence is, it does not constrain our free will, and it leaves to man the choice of his actions. The thing should be so: for what goodness or what malice could there be in human actions, if they were not free? Hence the existence of a moral providence, evidently supposes the existence and the exercise of our liberty. It supposes also a moral order, to which all men are subject, from their being capable of good or bad actions; subject, not through a physical necessity, but through a moral necessity, that imposes on them the obligation of conforming themselves to certain rules which God prescribes to them.

It is indisputable in the first place, that God is the author of these rules, that he could not dispense himself from establishing them, in creating intelligent and free agents, and that he

enforces the observance of them with promises of reward, or threats of punishment. Secondly, that no action, no thought, no desire, conformable or contrary to these rules escapes him; and that his vigilance in this regard, extends itself to all and to every individual.

We should not have a proper notion of God nor of his immensity, which renders him present to all, nor of his infinite knowledge, which is necessarily instructed in every thing, were we to believe that a providence so extensive and so multiplied, could cause in him the least constraint, the least perplexity; or that he only sees things in general, without entering into any detail. We should still, if I may say so, have a more improper notion of his sanctity, and of his justice, were we to suppose him indifferent to the moral good and evil that happen
in

in the universe, and were to imagine that there was no reward for the one, or punishment for the other.

But it is said, virtue suffers here below; it is despised, it is calumniated. Vice on the contrary triumphs; it enjoys with impunity, riches, honors, pleasures. Is this the moral order that is so much boasted of? Or rather are not all things full of disorder in this world?

This difficulty is only an apparent one; it solely arises from our not forming a complete idea of moral order. If it were confined to this life, did it not extend itself farther, there might be reason to accuse God of indifference, or of ignorance, or of impotence. But the object of moral order with respect to this present life, is not to reward all that is good, and to punish all that is evil; it is to command the one, and to prohibit the
Y 2 other;

other; it is to promise and to threaten. As to the effect of these promises, and of these threats, it is reserved for another life, where virtue will be eternally happy, and vice eternally miserable. Order will then be inviolably observed; man will no longer be able to break through it; the wicked will be forced to submit to it; and the virtuous will have no longer to apprehend, either a violation of it on their part, or an infringement of it from any other quarter.

It is in this point of view, it is with respect to this eternal destiny of happiness or of misery, that moral order is to be considered. Man is created for an happiness that has no end: but God will have him merit it, because he will only give it him by way of reward. Nothing can be more just, nothing can be more conformable to
order.

order. In this design, he has, therefore, placed him for a time on earth; he has given him laws, an understanding to know them, a will enabling him freely to determine himself to observe them, a conscience that gives him testimony of his fidelity, or that reproaches him with his disobedience. All the necessary helps for the observance of them are liberally offered to him; he is not ignorant of the promises, nor of the threats which accompany them. Through a generous bounty, God has given him room for repentance: he is always ready to pardon, provided we return to him from our heart.

Meanwhile he leaves each one of us master of his conduct, till the moment of his death; and, during that interval, he often permits the wicked to offend him with impunity, to prosper in their projects, and to oppress

the virtuous. Order seems to be violated : and in fact, it is so on the part of man, and for a while, but it is not absolutely so, and in itself, because the promises and the threats will infallibly take place, both for the good and bad, at their last hour. Then the short trial will end ; the eternal destiny of both will commence. The lot of the one will be a blessing without any mixture of evil, and that of the other will be an evil, without any mixture of any thing that is good. Then order will be unalterably and irrevocably fixed.

XXX.

XXX.

It cannot be that a son, for whom you shed such tears, should be lost. B. 3. c. 12.

THIS was the answer which a holy bishop made to Monica all in tears, who was entreating him to labour at the conversion of her son. *It cannot be.* This holy bishop judged that tears that were so bitter, so constant, and that had such an object in view, could not but be an effect of grace; he judged that the pious widow, who had been shedding them for so many years in the presence of God, did not pray to the Lord in vain, and that sooner or later he would attend to those tears which he himself occasioned to flow.

Monica only prayed for the conversion of her son: God had the design of granting her a much greater favour.

He proposed to make of Austin an eminent man in wisdom and in holiness; a bishop full of zeal and of charity; one of the most illustrious defenders of the faith, and the most brilliant luminary of the Church. Fifteen years of prayers and of lamentations were not too much for so great a benefit. He had also in view that the mother should sanctify herself by her tears; and that the prayers of the mother for her son, should be equally useful to both.

Did mankind know how nearly God connects the salvation, and even the holiness of children, with the prayers and the tears of their parents; did mothers in particular, who have the most fondness for them, direct this fondness to its proper object, to the object which christian mothers ought to have in view above every thing else, sanctity in some measure would be propogated

propagated with the blood; and children would be indebted to their parents for the life of grace, as well as for that of nature.

If there be prayers which God inspires; if there be any which he commands, and which he is inclined to hear, they are particularly those which a father or a mother puts up to him, not for the temporal prosperity, but for the eternal welfare of their family. These prayers are such an incumbent duty upon them, that their own sanctification depends upon them. The major part of the graces which God bestows on the marriage state, are given in behalf of the children; and the good use that parents make of them, is for them, as well as for their children, the most efficacious means of salvation.

It sometimes happens, I own, that pious parents have children that are

not

not so; who do not correspond with their instruction, nor with their examples, and for whom their prayers are fruitless. But this case is rare; and morally speaking, it cannot be, that they who pray as Monica did, with fervor, with confidence and perseverance, should not obtain what they petition. But let the effect of their prayers be what it will with regard to their children, they never are lost with respect to themselves. They must offer these prayers for their own salvation; and unless they fulfil this duty, God will call them to an account for it, whatever may become of their children; with much greater reason will he call them to account, should their children be lost, because they neglected to pray for them.

Let us suppose that Monica had not prayed, or that she should have prayed but faintly for Austin, it is likely
that

that he never would have been converted: for he acknowledges every where in his writings, that he owed his conversion to the tears of his mother. What an immense loss would it have been to to the Church! All the good that Austin did in his life time, and since his death by his writings, would never have taken place; and though Monica could not foresee it, she still would have been in some sense responsible for it. Austin would have been lost, but would she herself have been saved? This is very dubious. In the order of predestination her salvation might have been annexed to that of her son; and as she became a saint by praying with so many tears for the conversion of this son, she might have been cast away had she been unfaithful to grace on this head.

Christian parents who love your children dearly, who wish them every
temporal

temporal advantage, who spend yourselves in care and solicitude to promote their interest, without neglecting their temporal concerns, carry your views higher, think on their eternal welfare. They are not barely men whom you have brought into the world, they are also Christians; and Christians are not of this world, they are only travellers in it. Heaven is their country, and it is for heaven that you have begotten them. Be not satisfied with giving them a good education, and setting them good example: pray for them, pray fervently and constantly. Should they not correspond with your care, should their youth be stormy, should they, like Austin, follow wicked ways, and hazard the loss of their faith, be not disheartened; renew your supplications: the moment of grace will arrive. You may have, like Monica, the consolation of seeing their
return

return to God; should you die before that happens, you will carry with you into the other world, the pleasing hope of it.

Have always in your mind the answer of that holy bishop; and full of confidence say to yourselves, it cannot be, that a son, whose spiritual death I have wept over for so many years, for whom I have daily presented to God my most fervent prayers, should perish. Perhaps the one you pray for will become a saint, and the instrument of the salvation of many souls.

Reflect that when you pray for your children you pray for yourselves: that this duty is of a strict and rigorous obligation; that your sanctification, and even your salvation is annexed to it. Your duties as fathers and mothers, are relative to your children; and their souls are the principal object of them. Labour therefore every way
to

to save them, that you may at least save your own. There is an age in which your advice or reprimand might be ill received, in which indocile children will almost dispute your right of speaking to them with authority. But prayers are at all times seasonable; they are always welcome before God, and are more beneficial than reproaches, which are often attended with harshness and bitterness. Let it not be your fault if your whole family be not reunited around you one day in heaven: then you will eternally congratulate yourselves for having been doubly their fathers, as to soul, and as to body.

XXXI.

What am I to myself without thee, but a guide who leads himself to a precipice ?

B. 4. c. 1.

WHO is it who thus speaks of himself, and who acknowledges with so much humility, that, without God, he must need go astray and lose himself ? It is one of the brightest geniuses, one of the most upright hearts, a man the most wise, the most enlightened, the most sincerely attached to truth, that ever appeared upon the earth. The experience he had of his errors and of his disorders made him hold this language ; he knew that the light and the grace of God alone had withdrawn him from them, and that without this help he never could have come out of the precipice into which he had thrown himself.

Let

Let every one examine himself here, and do himself justice, as Austin did: let him take a retrospect of the whole course of his life: let him recall all the false, whimsical and foolish ideas that have passed through his mind; all the passions that have risen in his heart, all the temptations to which he has been exposed; and he will readily grant that of himself he can only mislead himself; that he has in effect gone astray as often as he has been his own guide; and that if he has been fortunate enough not to have taken any wrong step, it is the guidance of God to which he is indebted.

The condition of man, his ignorance, his weakness, the strength of his inclinations, the power of occasions and of example; unforeseen opportunities, the seduction of the false maxims of the world; in short, the personal experience of almost all mankind, all concur

to testify the truth, and establish it as one of the principles of morality that is the most certain and the most evident.

And yet very few are upright and humble enough to agree to it, and to follow it in practice. Most are for judging in every thing for themselves: they are for governing themselves: they presume on their own lights, and on the soundness of their judgment: they rely on the dispositions of their heart, on their resolutions, and on their intentions. They flatter themselves that they have the command over their passions. Consequently they expose themselves to every thing, they think themselves fit for every thing, and at all times capable of answering for themselves. Far from abandoning themselves to God, and entrusting him with the care of their conduct in the most intricate and dangerous circumstances of

life, they do not consult him; they do not pray to him; they do not think of him; they fancy they stand not in need of him.

It is however indisputable that God is the light of every mind, and the hidden mover of every heart; that every good thought, every good sentiment comes from him. Reason alone has taught the philosophers that he is in the intellectual world, what the sun is in the visible world; that he enlightens it, that he heats it, and vivifies it. Without him our understanding would be all darkness, and our heart all corruption. We hold from him all that is good within us, all that leads us to know and to love virtue; and if we make a good use of our lights and of our liberty, that also is his gift.

Add to this, that by his infinite prescience he alone knows all the occasions in which we shall be; all the events

events that will happen to us, and which it is impossible for us either to foresee or avoid; all the sequel and the issue of the schemes we shall form; what our thoughts will be, our sentiments, our actions, on every occasion; in short, what condition we shall be in when death will surprize us. That by his providence, which is equally infinite, he arranges every thing, disposes of every thing at pleasure, even of our wills; he oversets, when he pleases, our best concerted measures; so that as we never can be sure of any thing, we cannot properly answer for any one thing; and that of all the things we have foreseen, feared, hoped for, or resolved upon, nothing will happen but what God chuses to happen, or chuses to permit.

Moreover, God knows our real interests infinitely better than we do ourselves; he views every thing, and

judges every thing with a reference to our salvation and to eternity; he directs all things to this end; he knows what can conduct us to it, or what can lead us astray; he is all-powerful to remove every obstacle, and to procure us every means. His bounty towards us is infinite also; he loves us, he wishes to save us, and if we leave him to dispose of us, he will infallibly save us.

What powerful reasons are these which arise from his part as well as from our own, to engage us to put ourselves entirely under his direction; to undertake nothing without having consulted him; to entreat him by all manner of ways to make his will known to us, and punctually to comply with it when once we know it!

But where are those to be found who thus give themselves up to God? Where are those who incessantly con-
jure

jure him, to govern them himself; who lay at his feet their own mind and wills; who only use their liberty, to return it to him again; who commission him with all their concerns, even temporal; and who, of their own head, are unwilling to conceive any design, to form any resolution, to take any step that can alter their situation, and the order that providence has upon them? Even amongst those who have religion and piety, how many are there who suffer themselves to be led entirely by the Spirit of God, and who do not mix in their devotion, their own prejudices, their own stubbornness, their own whims and fancies?

There is nothing so rare; and to behold how mankind think and act, one would imagine that they were totally charged with the care of themselves; that they were the disposers of their own destiny, or at least that they con-

sidered themselves as such, and that God had no share or influence in their concerns.

What happens in consequence of this? In the first place, all errors, disorders and crimes of every kind, are the effects of it; because every one follows the deceitful lights of his own mind, and the still more deceitful and dangerous inclinations of his heart. Throughout the whole world there is a conflict of false opinions and of passions, that incessantly thwart and clash with each other. Heresy, irreligion, libertinism and wickedness prevail; and mankind every where run headlong to their ruin, by conducting themselves.

In the second place, from hence arise continual disappointments: frustrated hopes, abortive projects, which in the long run must be relinquished; vicissitudes of fortune; and from a necessary

fary consequence, solitudes, sorrows and dismal despondencies; great trouble, agitation and vexation, never any peace, never any rest. Thus does life pass away, because men will be arbitrators of it, and rule it according to their own fancy. And what is the end of all this? An eternal misery for the most of mankind.

Shall we then never conceive that we have no greater enemy than ourselves, that there is no one of whom we ought to be more diffident? that God is our only resource, our only refuge, our only preservative against all the temporal and spiritual evils which our blind presumption draws upon us?

Ah! how much reason have we all to say with St. Austin, what am I to myself without thee, O my God, but a guide that throws himself into a precipice. After this humble acknowledg-

ment, let us put our conduct, as he did, into the hands of God. Let us reflect on what Austin was before he gave himself to him, and on what he became after he had done it. It will be the same with us, if we chuse it. We shall only be truly enlightened, as God shall enlighten us: we shall only be safely conducted, as he shall be our guide; and shall only attain to happiness as he shall give us succour.

XXXII.

There is no true friendship, but that which thou formest between those who are united to thee by charity. B. 4. c. 4.

IF this thought be true, what becomes of all that human moralists, both ancient and modern, have written concerning friendship? What becomes of the ideas that are generally entertained in

in the world on this subject? And yet St. Austin had not thus defined friendship, without having thought on it maturely. He may possibly have been mistaken: but before we tax him with error, let us examine the thing as deeply and as solidly as he himself had examined it.

Friendship is not true, unless it be founded on esteem, and unless it produce on both sides a pure and solid attachment; esteem, to be just and proper, supposes in friends those qualities of the mind and of the heart, which render a man perfect in his kind, or at least which tend to perfect him: it supposes also a power of discerning those qualities, and an equity that does them justice.

The attachment also that characterizes friendship to be pure, must be disengaged from all passion, from all view of personal interest; and to be
solid,

solid, it must be sincere, intimate, and resting upon motives that are not liable to change.

Moreover, although friendship may subsist notwithstanding a diversity of opinions and of inclinations: it is, however, necessary that the sentiments and inclinations should agree in things that are the most essential, such as those that concern religion and probity.

From hence it follows, and the Heathens have acknowledged it, that there can be no friendship between the wicked, nor between the good and the wicked, nor between persons opposite in sentiments on religion, which is the grand object of man; and consequently that friendship can only take place between two souls that are friends to piety and to virtue.

Let us also add, that the soul being immortal, and destined for a happiness which is never to end, friendship would be

be limited to too short a term, if it did not subsist beyond this life; and if death, that separates the bodies, separated also the souls, in such manner, as to have no longer any commerce between them. True friendship therefore should have no other term than eternity; and even it is only after death, that it becomes perfect, settled and invariable.

If this be true, as we cannot call it in question, when we consider what is the nature of man, what his end is, what his duties are, and what his hopes are for another life; that God being his only and sovereign good, he ought to love him above all things, and love nothing but in reference to him: we conceive how much reason St. Austin had to say, that there is no real friendship but that which God himself forms by the ties of charity. That is to say, that two persons love each other truly,
but

but in as much as they love God, and that the love which they have for God is the principle, the basis, and the knot of their mutual friendship.

Thus, it is God alone who can bring together two real friends, who ties them and unites them together, in virtue of the union which they have with him; and their reciprocal friendship subsists as long as they are, the one and the other, friends of God. From the moment that one of the two, or both break with God, they necessarily break the one with the other, because the necessary tie that united their hearts is broken. Sin, which is an enemy to charity, is therefore an enemy to friendship; it radically destroys it, and renders the heart, in which it dwells, incapable of it.

One must be a Christian, and solidly and interiorly a Christian, before he can well be acquainted with this truth.

Carnal

Carnal men, given over to their senses, and to their temporal interests, do not comprehend it. They know no other friendship, than that which has for objects the things of this life; than that in which God has no share, and which is annihilated by the death of one of the two friends, leaving to the other but a vain affliction. Austin had had this idea of friendship before God had enlightened him, and he had loved after this manner in his youth.

They would think very differently, if they could raise themselves up to the eternal truths, to the solid and unchangeable good for which they are made; did they aspire to the possession of God; and if in the hope of possessing him one day, they loved him here below with all their heart. Then they would conceive that to love any one, is to wish him all the good that
they

they wish to themselves; that to love truly and solidly, is to wish the only true and solid good, which is no other than God; that if the sincere and reciprocal desire of this only good, forms a friendship in this short life, the enjoyment of this same good will perfect and eternize it in the next; and that it is thus mutually to procure to each other this happy enjoyment, to which ought to tend all their desires, all their counsels, all their admonitions, and all their intimacies of friendship.

All this will be looked upon as an idle fancy in the mind of worldlings; but it is not to confirm them in their ideas that I write, but to engage them to take up others. Let them think what they will, it will always be true, that the measure and the rule of friendship being to love one's friend, as one loves himself, and that man
only

only truly loves himself as he loves God, by a necessary consequence the love of God is the primitive source, and the first rule of all friendship.

Thus did St. Austin and Alipius love each other; thus also did St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen. Their friendship was totally grounded on God; it became more strong, and more intimate in proportion as they grew in the love of God, and in holiness. It had no other object than the good things of eternity. It did not end with their life. Their souls love each other still, because they live in God; they will love each other eternally, because they will love God eternally. At the general resurrection their bodies will partake, after their manner, of this friendship, the pleasantness of which will reflect on the senses. They will see, and mutually communicate to each other, their thoughts

thoughts through the organ of speech, and give tokens to each other, of a pure and holy benevolence. Consider, I beseech you, how much religion ennobles, how much it exalts, and sanctifies the human affections; how it communicates to them, the eternity and immutability of God.

From all this, we must of necessity conclude, that there are no true friends in the world, but those who have renounced the world with heart and affection; who are only taken up with their eternal salvation; who make this their grand, their only concern; and who are united only in the view of reciprocally assisting each other in bringing it to bear: that all other friendships are, or criminal, or dangerous, or frivolous: or that they have at most a goodness purely moral, in which religion has no share: that they are consequently false, empty, barren,
exposed

exposed to a rupture on every trivial occasion; ^{and} worthy of the sacred name of friendship; that they end with this life, which is like a flash of lightning or a dream; and that they have no other effect for the next life, than to contribute, perhaps, to the eternal loss of those, who have thus loved themselves here below.

XXXIII.

Every man engaged in the love of mortal things, is miserable: his heart is torn, when he loses them; and at this moment he feels he was miserable, even before he had lost them. B. 4. c. 6.

THE attachment to mortal and perishable things, is subject to a terrible and an unavoidable inconvenience; which is, that a separation must ensue, and they must be lost. Either they leave us, or we leave them. A

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thousand accidents deprive us of them; and should we peaceably possess them during our life, death comes and snatches them from us. We must always come sooner or later, to this sorrowful separation; and because the moment of it is uncertain, we must be in fear of it every moment. If our soul be immortal, it is evidently not made for such attachments; and if death which may surprise us at every instant, will one day dissolve them for ever, it is impossible that they should make us happy, even for one instant.

But let us consider what passes within us, when these darling objects are no longer ours. This loss must necessarily be painful to us, in proportion to our affection; and if we had placed our happiness in them, we cannot but be miserable at losing them. There, therefore, ensues a laceration that is extremely painful, because these
objects

objects held close to our soul, and were glued to it. This union was not only on the surface, but was deep and intimate, so that the pain of separation reaches to the centre. I say nothing of the surprise, the confusion and vexation, that follow for having placed our affection on things, that we were to possess for so short a time, and for having depended on so frail and so fleeting a happiness.

This laceration is succeeded by a bitter regret, at seeing ourselves deprived of what we so passionately loved, of what we had acquired with so much pain and trouble, and the fruition of which we had hoped would have been lasting. I have been in pursuit of this dignity, says the ambitious man, these twenty years; as soon as I reach it I am thrown out of it, or must step down from it into my grave. I have spent my whole life, says the

miser, in heaping up treasures, in acquiring possessions, I but begin to enjoy them, and now they are snatched from me. Every thing perhaps, had been sacrificed to these purposes; duty, conscience and religion. In vain do we lean towards these objects, in vain do we grasp at them, and use efforts to retain them. A superiour force wrenches them from us, they fly from us, they escape from us, and we only can follow them with vain desires.

This painful sentiment, presently makes room for that of a horrid void. The heart has nothing to hold by, or to rest in. It is pressed with a violent thirst, and finds nothing to quench it; it devours, as it were, and consumes itself. What is the interiour state of that courtier who suddenly loses his dignity, his honors, and his credit; of that passionate lover, whom death, or any other event, deprives of the
object

object of his love; of that rich man, who is stript of his riches, and is reduced to beggary? What has he left? What a dreadful indigence! what rage, and what despair! We have daily this spectacle before our eyes, and we are not moved at it; and we do not think that what has happened to others to-day, will happen to us to-morrow. It seems that these accidents do not regard us, and that we have no reason to apprehend, that any thing of the kind will befall us.

That we must be wretched, when we lose what we solely cherished, is what will be readily agreed to. But St. Austin adds, that we were already so, before we suffered this loss. And why? Because we carried the seed of our misery, in the inevitable necessity of this loss; because we could not help foreseeing it, and dreading it; because we knew that it was infal-

libly to take place, either by death, or in some other manner. Now whoever sets all his affection on a thing, which he knows he must one day be deprived of, is already miserable; for this alone, because he cannot avoid becoming so, and because he is not ignorant of it. He who should go to sea with a certainty of shipwreck, would he sail in peace? His only resource would be, to smother the thought of the fatal moment. How pitiful is the expedient! All the lovers of the world are in the same situation.

What completes the wretchedness of him, who is in love with mortal things, is, that there is nothing to replace what he has lost, which is not exposed to the same inconveniency. Will he pursue other honors, other pleasures, other riches? These objects are of the same nature, and liable to similar misfortunes. I say as much

of

of a wife, of a husband, and of children. When we have acquired others, and are as tenderly attached to them, the moment of the doleful separation must equally come; and will be a second misery that will aggravate the former.

The only method to be followed is, carefully to avoid setting our affection on what must perish, and to use the things of this world, as St. Paul admonishes, as if we used them not. But must we not be attached to some object? Without a doubt. And, that we may turn ourselves to God, we are advised to turn from every thing else; to God who will never be the first to forsake us, and whom we never can lose unless we chuse it. God is the only good, the possession of which, we are so much the more sure of, as we love him the more; he is the only one who renders us happy be-

forehand, through the hope of enjoying him. How much are the worldlings to be pitied, and how doubly blind and senseless they are, both as to the objects they are in pursuit of, and the only valuable object which they disdain!

XXXIV.

Happy is he who loves thee, who loves his friend in thee, and his enemy for thee. B. 4. c. 9.

HOW TRUE, how beautiful, how holy is this morality, which shews in God, not only the principle, but the only object of our love, and which teaches us to love mankind in him! This short maxim embraces all, and extends to all. Now, more than ever, Pagan morality is admired; it is loudly preferred to that of the gospel. Let

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any one produce, from the records of antiquity, a maxim, that bears a comparison with this.

Is it not astonishing, that the finest geniuses, and the most honest hearts (for I do not mean to contend here with some heathens about their moral virtues) after so much study and so many researches, should not have discovered, that which was the most important for man to know, and which seems to be extracted from the very essence of his being? What is there in reality more natural, more reasonable, more equitable, more conformable to the inward disposition of the human heart, than to fix the seat of its love in the Being, who is the most perfect, and the most amiable; in the Being from whom we have received all, from whom we expect all, and on whom we depend at every moment for all? And then to love in God himself,

himself, our fellow creatures who deserve our love; that is to say, to love them with an extension of the love which we bear to God, and through the same principle of charity, in observing a proportionable rule and subordination. In this manner our love is not divided; in every heart it flows from a common centre, and reunites itself to it again. It is not inordinate, because the different degrees of affection follow a just measure, and are subordinate to the principal affection. It is not subject either to passion, or caprice, or inconstancy, or to the vicissitudes of time; because it rests on a basis that is immutable, eternal, and infinitely elevated above the flesh and the senses.

What is more reasonable also, in the principles of the Christian religion, than to love our enemies, not on their own account, because they give us no
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motive to love them; but on the account of God, whose creatures they are, like ourselves, whom he has loved, whom he has redeemed as he has us, and whose salvation he desires as well as ours? He is always ready to pardon their offences, to be reconciled to them, and to restore them to his favour. They hurt themselves by offending him; but he wishes them no evil, he only waits for a repentance on their part, and a sincere return, in order to bestow on them his blessings.

Is it not equitable that we should be in the same dispositions? Is not God the first and the most grievously offended, by the injuries we receive from our neighbours? And since he grants them pardon as soon as they ask it, should we not grant it also at his example. Do we not stand in need of God's indulgence to ourselves, and
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do we not solicit it daily? Through what title do we hope to obtain it, if we refuse it to our brethren? Why should God follow in our regard a rule, which he prescribes to us with regard to our neighbour, and to which we refuse to submit? The maxim, therefore, of St. Austin is true, judicious, and equitable in all its parts.

In practice it elevates man above himself and self-love, which lessens and contracts him. The motives which it inspires him with, ascend up to God, and reach the first principle; it is impossible to soar higher. It purifies his affections, which then are but a flowing, an unfolding of the love which he has for God. And as all our sins proceed from the impurity and the disorder of our affections: this maxim faithfully observed, would banish from the earth every crime, and would only leave lesser faults and imperfections, that

that are conducive to keep man in humility, and in the practice of virtue.

It is also proper to consider how plain this morality is. Three words include the whole: by loving God as you ought, you love your neighbour, and you love yourself. To learn this morality, to be acquainted with all the duties of it, there is no occasion for doctors, nor for books, nor for a long and deep study. An ordinary mind, a great rectitude of heart, and a good will are sufficient. Man need but wish to practise it, he need but humbly ask of God his assistance, without which he can do nothing, and he will find the whole of it written in his own heart. Let him but love God; let him study to please him in all things: let him dread, above all, to offend him; let him be constantly attentive to what God speaks to his conscience; and at every moment he will receive necessa-

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ty lights to acquit him of his obligations; should he chance to fail, secret reproaches will admonish him of his fault. In all his doubts, should he want advice, God will direct him to judicious guides, and will not permit him to be led into error.

The knowledge of christian morality, although very extensive, is neither difficult nor complicated; the whole of it is reduced to a small number of sure and evident points. An upright heart, pure and full of the love of God, is of all the casuists the first and the surest for our personal conduct. And if in the concerns of life it may not be always an easy matter to foresee; or to avoid every inconveniency, we may at all times behave ourselves so as to avoid offending God.

That the happiness of mankind, even in this life, is annexed to the observance of this morality, two things clearly

ly demonstrate, reason and experience. What makes us miserable? Self-love. Whatever afflicts the mind, whatever torments the heart, springs from this cause alone. This love is the great enemy of the love of God; because it excludes God from every thing, in order to place itself in his stead. And consequently it excludes the gospel, that commands us to love God above all things, and every thing else with a reference to him, and has for its direct object our happiness, by banishing self-love from our hearts.

Evident as this reasoning may be, which I could back with a great many others, experience is still more decisive. I always appeal to experience, because it is the touchstone, the most certain rule, and the easiest to verify. There have been at all times, there are also now in every condition good Christians who love God for himself,
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their friends in God, and their enemies for God. Were they asked if they be happy, notwithstanding the adversities and the evils of this life, to which they are liable as well as others, and often more so than others, they all, without hesitation, would answer that they are, and that they would not commit the least sin, to bring about any change in their present situation, how painful and dolorous it may be. Whosoever would answer differently, would not be in the disposition in which every good Christian ought to be. I grant that the number of those who are in these sentiments is very small: but where does the fault lie? Were they still more rare, there will always be enough to confute and condemn all those, who against reason, against religion, and against their conscience, look out for happiness independently of the observance of christian morality. It cannot

not be where God has not placed it, and it cannot but be where he has placed it.

XXXV.

Whither does he go who leaves thee? whither does he fly, but from a God full of bounty, to an irritated God? B. 4. c. 9.

WHATSOEVER side man ranks himself upon, he must have to do with God, either as a father, or as a judge: there is absolutely no middle place. This is what ought to be attentively meditated upon by them who fall into sin, and more particularly by those who take the dreadful resolution of remaining in it.

What a terrible truth for them! They want to renounce God, they want to forget him, and to be forgotten by
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him; they could wish that he did not exist, and they try by vain arguments to persuade themselves that he does not. But let them do what they will, they are, and always will be, under the hand of God, and under his immediate dependance. Let them soar up to the highest of the heavens, let them descend to the bowels of the earth, let them go beyond the seas, they will not escape from the presence or the domain of God. They are masters to render themselves unworthy, and to deprive themselves of the effects of his goodness; but then they cannot avoid the strokes of his justice, it will find them when it pleases; in vain do they fly, in vain do they hide themselves; nothing can screen them.

They are not ignorant of this; and all their endeavour is to dispel the thought of it: but what do they gain by that? They continually gather on
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their heads new stores of wrath; they only swell the thunder that is to crush them. At least, do they say, we acquire an unconcernedness during life, we can sin without remorse; we can relish whatever pleasure results from the gratification of our passions. An unfortunate unconcernedness and security which they owe to the obstinate pains which they take to stupify and to blind themselves; a security that fixes their ruin, and renders it unavoidable. A man is walking in a pleasing road that ends in a precipice; he knows it, he is informed of it; but the road pleases him; and without concern about the term, in order to pursue his gratification contentedly, he stops his ears, and turns aside his eyes. Such, and incomparably greater is the folly of the sinner who imagines to escape the wrath of God, by not thinking of it.

Observe the two extremes which St. Austin joins together; what he loses who forsakes God, and what he finds. He loses the sovereign good, and finds the sovereign evil: he loses the one, and finds the other for ever more: never will he be able to repair his loss, or alleviate his evil. And why does he expose himself to this evil? Why does he lose this good? This is what is inconceivable: to satisfy during a few moments a passion which he never will be able to gratify fully, and which will incessantly torment him.

O God! is it possible that people can thus renounce the purest lights of reason and of faith! that they will not think that it is impossible for them to shun your vengeance, and that you will infallibly reign over him with your justice, who refuses to taste the sweetness of the reign of your mercy! *It is horrible, says St. Paul, to fall into*
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the hands of the living God, after having taken pleasure to irritate him. But it is infinitely desirable to fall into the hands of the God of mercies. Man has his choice upon earth; he is between the expectation of the greatest happiness, and the apprehension of the greatest misery. Death which is inevitable, and which may happen at every instant, will decide for the one or for the other.

Am I, at this moment, in a state to hope for every thing from the goodness of God? or rather have I not reason to apprehend every thing from his just wrath? Have I any expedient to escape his justice? None. How then can I be tranquil? How can I relish any pleasure, I, over whose head is suspended the sword of the divine fury? Does he threaten me the less, because I do not chuse to lift up my eyes to behold it? Who withholds this sword?

It is the pure goodness of God; it is his patience, that waits for my conversion. But, if I will not change, if I always delay, the fatal hour will come, the sword will fall on my head.

How much more time have I left? I know not: I cannot answer for one instant. Perhaps I have not an hour. But should I have years, they will lapse: I shall one day stand on the edge of the last. My conversion which God demands of me now, will it become easier by a delay, and by continuing to heap sins upon sins? Quite the contrary; my heart will harden; grace, without which I can do nothing, will be less powerful; God will be at a greater distance, and I shall have more obstacles to encounter and to overcome, before I can return to him again. Can I hesitate on what I should do; and am I not my own most cruel enemy,

enemy, if whilst I have yet time, I do not provide for my eternal welfare?

O my God! may the sight of your goodness finish in me, that which, at this moment, the fear of your justice has begun. In this irritated judge, whom I have for so long a time vainly attempted to fly from, I may, when I please, find a most loving Father. I see that when I turn towards thee, thou openest thy arms to receive me; shall I refuse to take any step towards a reconciliation? If I am insensible to thy love, I deserve that this injured love should seal my reprobation.

XXXVI.

The place of an undisturbed repose is there where love is not abandoned, unless itself abandons. B. 4. c. 11.

WHAT do men aim at, by the agitations and hurries into which they throw themselves? They aim at rest, and at a repose that nothing can trouble: which proves that happiness is in the calm, that follows the satiety of the desires of the soul. When I have obtained such a dignity, says the ambitious man, I shall be easy, I shall have all I wish for. I shall cease to accumulate, says the miser, and I shall enjoy in peace my fortune, when I have amassed so much. The man of pleasure says as much, with regard to the object of his wishes; and it is certain, that this is the language

guage of all mankind who indulge their passions.

I know that they are deluded in this their hope, and that when they have obtained what they aimed at, they will not be the more at rest. But this is not what is actually in question. What I mean to advance for the present is, that the prospect of a repose more or less remote, is the motive of all the pains which they take, that it is what animates and supports them; and that their passions would not long impose upon them, did they not constantly set before them this agreeable perspective. The whole artifice of the passions, consists in removing this perspective, in proportion as we draw towards it, and in constantly inviting us to pursue it: this is the true image of human life; a painful and unrelenting march, with a purpose of stopping at a term, which we never
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can reach, because it is constantly forwarded on before us.

All, therefore, aspire at rest, and labour to attain it. They are not blamable in this, for it is the deepest rooted instinct in our nature, But, besides the illusion into which their passions lead them, there is another error into which they voluntarily fall, and is that which the sentence of St. Austin expresses. Repose is not to be found where they place it. They place it in the enjoyment of perishable things, which certainly will frustrate their hope. I am willing to suppose, that they will obtain what they desire; I even suppose, what never happens, that when they have obtained it, they will be fully satisfied; that they will desire nothing beyond; that they never will be disgusted with it. They cannot, however, but be sensible that the object, which they cherish must

at last escape from their love; that the more they were attached to it, the more painful will be the loss of it, and that this loss must take place, at the latest, when they die.

Let them try, if they can, to convince themselves with strong demonstrations, that their soul is mortal, and that it will end with this life. Or if they cannot come at this conviction, let them not fix the centre of their rest, (they who have a durable existence,) in things that go and come, and that no strength can fix or retain. I say that nothing less will do, than strong demonstrations: for in a doubt whether they be immortal or no, they must be insane to attach themselves to mortal objects: besides, what rest could they find in a state of doubt?

Were this but an error of mere speculation, the evil would not be so great. But it is a practical error; it is an error

ror of the greatest consequence in morality, a capital error, and the source of all other errors: an error equally prejudicial to human society, and to individuals, prejudicial for the time present, and more so for eternity. How is it possible that man should thus so palpably deceive himself in respect to his ultimate destination, in respect to his only real concern, since every thing else should only draw his attention as it relates to this main object?

This illusion may be to a certain degree excusable, glaring and criminal as it is, in the heat of youth, in the first scene of the seduction of the world, in the absence of reflection, and in the violent impetuosity of the passions. But that in a riper age, even in old age, people should not be undeceived either from experience or from the infirmities which acquaint them with the necessity they are under of soon leaving

all behind them, that they should still continue to accumulate; to ambition dignities, to entertain, or even form new connections, whilst they stand on the edge of the grave, is what can neither be excused or conceived.

But how can we persuade ourselves that God is the seat of our repose; when we have long acquired the habit of seeking it elsewhere? How can we relish an object so pure, and so elevated above the region of our senses; when we are quite terrene and quite material? How can we pay attention to another life, when our thoughts have been totally taken up with the present? Can we suddenly change and mould ourselves immediately anew? It is not a total and instantaneous change that is proposed or expected, but a change that comes on by degrees. Does a sick man alledge the impossibility of his cure, because he cannot

cannot recover but by degrees and through a long course of diet? In the moral as well as in the physical, good and evil have their progress, often slow and imperceptible.

That this change however is difficult, that it calls for serious pains and reflection, is what I readily agree to. But it is sufficient that it be not impossible, to try every expedient to bring it about. For eternity is at stake; and it would be the height of madness to yield to the greatest obstacles, when an interest of this nature is in question. Are there not obstacles in the way of fortune, in the way of pleasure? Were they not foreseen? did they dishearten? were not efforts made to overcome them? Make the like efforts in the business of salvation, and I will engage for success.

I confidently advance that if we knew how to turn to advantage some certain

be certain motions of grace, some certain reflections that occasionally present themselves to our mind, some certain checks and disgusts which we often experience, and which compel us to think, and even deeply to feel that the things here below are not made to fill the heart of man: if in these moments we addressed ourselves to God; and prayed him to assist us to break through our chains; if we took any step to draw nearer to him, and draw him nearer to us, we should not find in our conversion so much difficulty as we apprehend.

But this very thing, will people say, is attended with great difficulty: it is difficult to improve upon these reflections, those checks and disgusts; it is difficult to pray to God, after having forgotten him almost all our life time.

Or rather the difficulty does not arise from those things in themselves, but from

from a want of will. What answer shall I make to this? Is it meant that there is a time when a return to God is impossible? Do they mean to despair of salvation, and justify their despair? Woe unto us should we take this thought, it must necessarily be the effect of a dreadful punishment from God. Since on our part the whole consists in willing, let us beg of God this good will; we begin to have it, when our petition is sincere: let us give alms to this intention; let us engage pious souls in our interest; let us try every thing to disengage our heart from the slavery of mortal things, and to turn it towards the only place of its repose and of its happiness.

XXXVII.

God is intimately present to the heart; but the heart has strayed from him. Prevaricators return to your heart, and attach yourselves to him who has made you. B. 4. c. 12.

THAT God is intimately present to the heart of man; not by a mere physical presence, which is a necessary consequence of his immensity; but by a moral presence, by a presence the effect of which is to enlighten, to excite, and to govern it; is a truth which reason and faith teach us, and of which our conscience gives continual testimony. For what is that interior voice which leads to what is good, and withdraws from evil, which admonishes and reprehends us? This voice does not come from ourselves, since it makes itself be heard often against our

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will, even when we use our utmost endeavours to stifle it. It is therefore evidently the voice of God. And where does it make itself heard? In the inmost recess of the heart, in the seat even of reason and of free-will, in a place which is inaccessible to the senses, to the imagination, to the passions; in a word, in the sanctuary of the soul. This voice judges us; it approves us in our good actions, condemns us in our bad actions, and keeps us in suspense and disturbed in those actions that are dubious. It has therefore a superior authority over us; and who besides God can exert at every instant such a superiority on the very essence of our soul?

Were we never to lose sight of this great truth; were our heart always present to God, as God is always intimately present to our heart; were we always attentive to listen to him, al-
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ways ready to obey him, we never should offend him; we should accomplish his will with reverence and love. This correspondence of the heart with the presence of God is undoubtedly our first duty, and nothing should be so natural to man.

Let a king be present to his subject, a father to his son, a master to his servant; let him observe him, speak to him, and attend to the steps which he takes; will not this subject, this son, this servant be penetrated with the sentiment of this presence? Will he dare for a moment to admit of a distraction from the attention he owes him? Would he not severely reproach himself for this want of respect? Would not this presence encourage him in his duty? Would he be bold enough to break loose, and act contrary to the orders which he has received in so respectable a presence? And yet this

presence is only that of one man to another man; it is merely exteriour, and only acts on the soul by means of the senses. But the presence of God is that of the Creator to his creature, of the infinite Being to a worm; it is within us, immediately affects our soul; it reaches every where; it penetrates into our most hidden thoughts. How much sway and authority ought it not to have over us? How easy also and pleasing ought it to be to us to cast the eye of our soul on God, to hold it fixed upon him, if we had for him the sentiments of a loyal subject, of a generous child, or of a faithful servant?

But exteriour objects have a strange ascendant over the soul; they lay fast hold of it by means of the senses, attract it out, and draw it from within, where God is present. It suffers itself to be led away by the objects that strike it, and to be moved by their beauty:

beauty; it forms wishes for them, conceives a passion for them, and pants after them; by degrees it bestows on them all its esteem, and all its love. Thus does it neglect God, it loses sight of him, and dreads a return to him; and when God gives it any sentiment of his presence, this sentiment is painful and troublesome to it; and it diverts itself from it as much as possible.

It is however true that exterior objects are only the occasion of this disorder. The origin of it is an inexplicable bent in man towards every thing that is sensible; from whence follows an extreme reluctance to enter into himself, in order to think on God. It is not to the union of the soul with the body, that we are to ascribe this malady, but to original sin, which has rendered the mind, in some shape, a slave to the flesh.

But besides this violent inclination to sensible objects, the soul is subject of itself to another evil more profound and more dangerous, which inspires it with a desire of a still greater distance from God, I mean a fund of pride, independence, and an excessive love of itself. One of these vices makes all subjection insupportable to it; the other concentrates it in itself, and causes it to refer every thing to itself.

When the passions therefore, being irritated by sensible objects, excite in it any unruly desire; and when, at the same time, the voice of the inward master makes itself heard, who forbids it to yield to such a desire, who threatens it with his indignation; this prohibition shocks its pride, and provokes it to anger and revolt; it cannot endure to find itself thus domineered; it shakes off the yoke, and says, I will not obey. Thus does it fly from God under the titles

titles of sovereign, of legislator, and of judge; and in order to be more free from his authority, it banishes him from its thought.

Moreover, God who sees that in the pursuit of exterior objects the soul loves and seeks itself, wishing to satisfy itself to the prejudice of the love which is due to him, God, I say, rings in its ear this precept, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*: a precept that thunder strikes self love. But the soul indignant that God should forbid it to love itself otherwise than in him, and with a reference to him, turns away and removes farther and farther from a presence which is odious to it; because the drift of this precept is to wrest it from itself, and to oblige it to subordinate all its affections to the love of God.

These different causes united together, the external temptations which

solicit from without, and concupiscence, pride and self love, which act from within, at first render the presence of God importune to the soul: they then inspire it with a disgust and an aversion for it. At last they bring on almost a total forgetfulness, which is followed by a secret congratulation on having banished this thought, and a kind of a wish that God either did not exist, or that he did not see it, and think of it.

How will it ever be able to recover from this heaviness, from this spiritual lethargy? This disposition in man is wonderful, nor is it easily explained. He flies from his own heart, because were he to enter into it he would find God there: it is therefore his own heart that flies from itself. But if it flies from itself, how can it return to itself? To effect this, it must have a will that is contrary to the will which
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it has; and how can it of itself change wills? Hence a soul strayed from God never could return to him, if he did not speak to it in its flight, and call it back by secret invitations. It is God who says to it, unfaithful soul, quit those objects which thou runnest after; return to thy heart, and by the same road return to thy God. Look back; see, he is not far off. Thou fliest from him, but he runs after thee; thou forsakest him, but he seeks thee.

At this voice should it stop, should it look back; if, at seeing its God so near to it, struck with his goodness and its own ingratitude, it should testify a regret for having quitted him, and should humbly ask pardon for it, from that moment it is converted, and restored to God's grace; the union of God and of the heart takes place: the mutual presence is re-established. The soul has no more to do than to keep
itself

itself in this presence of God, by constantly remaining turned towards him. Then from an exterior soul which it was and taken up with sensible things, it will become an interior one, totally occupied with God, with itself, and with spiritual objects. If it perseveres, it will sin no more; for to sin it must withdraw from its centre: it will advance daily in God, and its constant communication with him will sanctify it.

XXXVIII.

Thou only approachest those who have a contrite heart, and the proud do not find thee. B. 5. c. 3.

WHETHER we consider God as the first truth, or as the sovereign good, it is certain that to know him under the first relation; and to possess him
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under the second, the chief disposition is humility: an humility of mind that does not presume on its knowledge, that does not arrogate to itself its discoveries, and that pays homage for them to God: an humility of heart, that takes no vain complacency in itself, that does not glory in its qualifications or virtues, but refers to God whatever good dispositions it may have.

Most philosophers of antiquity used their utmost endeavours to know God: to this purpose they employed all their leisure, all their studies, and all the sagacity of their mind. Did they come at the knowledge of him? Yes, sufficiently for their condemnation; sufficiently to avoid confounding him with their false divinities which the people adored, and which they themselves adored with the people. But barring that, what errors were there in the notion

tion which they formed of the first principle of all things? Not one of them allowed him the title of Creator; but only that of architect and of workman, who fashions a matter which he finds under his hand; many have denied or limited his providence and his prescience; some have subjected him to an inevitable fatality, almost all have deceived themselves on his nature, and have not known either his spirituality or his immensity.

And yet these are not mysteries inaccessible to reason, which, when put in the track by revelation, lifts itself up to these truths, it penetrates and demonstrates them; and we are in our days surpris'd that they should have escaped the researches of so many great wits. They made the most beautiful discoveries in geometry, and in most branches of mathematics. The arts and sciences owe to them their excellencies.

cies. But what it behoved them the most to know they were ignorant of, or had but a very defective notion.

How came that? Because they were proud, and the proud do not find God. They knew not that God is *the true light, that enlightens every man coming into the world*; that it is by this light that intellectual objects are discovered to us, and that without it the eyes of the soul see nothing. God allowed them the knowledge of the other sciences, which served to swell their pride more: but he hid from them the science that regards himself; because, in this study, they only relied on their own reason, which he was pleased to baffle and confound by a display of all its weakness.

The same has happened in every age. The pride of the mind, and curiosity which is a shoot of it, have produced all the errors in matters of religion.

gion. How absurd soever these errors were, the brightest geniuses gave into them. St. Austin was also ensnared. He believed that God was corporeal; he adopted the extravagant dreams of the Manicheans. He was not humble then; he thought that no truth could escape his penetration: and God, to make him feel that the human mind of itself is nothing but darkness, permitted him to fall into the greatest mistakes.

Now that the flambeau of revelation has cast such lively lights on the most interesting matters of philosophy, and that we have in all languages so many writings in which they are perfectly unfolded, how comes it that some have renewed, and even surpassed the errors of profane antiquity, on God, on the soul, on the natural law? Why has irreligion acquired in Europe so many favourers? It is because the human
mind,

mind, instead of resting on the divine authority, has betaken itself to its own speculations; it is because it has refused to take God for its guide, and chose to conduct itself. In the science of morals and religion, every reasoner who relies only on his own strength will always go astray. The experience of the past and of the present answers for what will be. God is jealous that men should acknowledge that it is he who enlightens the minds; he is desirous that they should give him the glory of their own knowledge, as to the source from whence they have drawn it. He requires that, being diffident of themselves, they should apply to him, and pray to him to direct them in the way to truth, and that they should not attempt to walk in it by themselves.

It is undoubtedly of the greatest importance that all mankind should be instructed

instructed in the great objects of the natural law; it is the most noble and the best use that we can make of our reason. God's intention is, that every one, according to his condition, should not only be a philosopher, but a possessor of wisdom. The commonalty will meet with a sufficiency for their conduct in church instruction; others may add to it their reasonings: but if they mean to come at a sure and certain knowledge, and not expose themselves to mix their own imaginations with the truths which the pure intelligence shall unveil to them, let them be humble; let them imitate St. Austin, who after his conversion had always recourse to God for instruction in all he wanted to know; who gave him thanks for all he had learnt, and inattentive to his own endeavours, consecrated all his science to the service and glory of his Master.

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If pride prevents the mind from knowing God as the first truth, the swelling of the heart prevents him still more from possessing him as the sovereign good. God does not communicate himself to a heart that is full of esteem and of love for itself, that is puffed up with vain hopes, and with a confidence which is still more vain; to a heart that wants to establish its own happiness on the objects that flatter its self-love. A soul thus disposed does not even imagine that God is the sovereign good; and far from ambitioning the possession of him, shuns him with all its might.

For this reason there is not to be found in all antiquity one single philosopher who believed that God was the sovereign good, the last end of man, and that man could not be happy but in the possession of him. And yet if there be a truth which reason and in-

timate sense and experience can demonstrate, it is this. Why has this truth, which is the very foundation of morality, been so much hidden and misrepresented? Because man would have his happiness to depend upon himself, and instead of referring every thing to God, he referred all to himself. Let God give me life said the ancient philosophers, let him give me riches, an evenness of soul shall be my own concern.

Let us check this pride; let us bruise and crush our swelling heart; let us assume those sentiments which alone belong to us; let us acknowledge our own insufficiency, and consequently the insufficiency of all created objects to make us happy. Our heart then will be void of the love of itself and of creatures, God will replenish it, he will kindle in it the fire of charity, which on earth will be the commencement, and

in heaven will be the consummation of our felicity.

XXXIX.

They say many things concerning the creature, but they do not seek with piety the truth that is the author of the creature, for this reason they do not find; or if they discover God by the understanding, they do not honour him as God. B. 5. c. 3.

HERE is the character as well as the condemnation of all the philosophers who were destitute of the true religion, and of all those who in Christendom, have undertaken to separate philosophy from religion. I hope to be pardoned for returning to this subject, as St. Austin gives me the opportunity of doing it. I also hope, that an occasional repetition of the

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same,

same, or similar to the former reflections, will not be deemed tedious, as there is now in our days nothing so necessary as solidly to establish the clear and just distinction between the true and the counterfeit philosophy; and to convince the public, that those who, in assuming the name of philosophers, with an intent to profess irreligion, and say we are philosophers, and not theologians, are not less enemies to philosophy, than they are to theology.

Philosophers then have made, and have published great discoveries relating to created objects. They have explored all nature with a curious eye, they have dived into all its productions, have studied all its motions, and examined all its laws. From the vaults of the heavens to the bowels of the earth, they have measured, weighed and calculated every thing.

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From their demonstrations, their systems and observations they have acquired the reputation of great geniuses.

Not satisfied with the invention or the perfection of arts and sciences, they have undertaken the government of mankind in giving them laws, and reforming abuses; and have pretended to establish peace and virtue throughout the world. These are doubtless grand views, and projects worthy of the greatest praise.

Such researches and such studies as these, should have naturally led them to the knowledge of God, both as the author of nature, and the principle of morality and legislation. For all sciences without exception, whether metaphysic, natural, moral, or political hold by this first truth, flow from it and terminate in it.

Nevertheless because these philosophers did not seek God *with piety*, some of them have strayed into absurd and impious systems, in which the Creator of the universe, the light that enlightens every mind, the author, the protector, and guardian of society had no share. Others may have discovered some particular truths; but have not perceived the concatenation of them, because they have separated them from the universal truth which links them all, and from which they draw all their strength and perspicuity.

Some others have doubted whether the Supreme Being existed, or whether certain proofs could be found of his existence. From hence arose their endless disputes on this subject, as well as on the other truths which rest upon that. From hence sprung the scepticks, the acatalepticks, and in short
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all those who have pretended to say that there was nothing certain, nothing demonstrable, and nothing comprehensible.

But those philosophers who reached to a knowledge, more or less unfolded of God, have hardly rendered themselves less culpable than the others. Through human respect, they refused him the homage, which they knew was due to him, and they sacrificed like the ignorant vulgar to divinities, which they scorned in their hearts. Who could justify or excuse on this head Pythagoras and his disciples, Plato, Xenophon, the whole Socratical school, and Socrates himself?

The source of the evil is that those lovers, whether sincere or simulated of wisdom, by not seeking God as they ought, did not deserve that God should unveil himself to them, or that

he should bestow on them the necessary graces, to enable them to confess him publicly, and glorify him in the face of idolatry. But what is it to seek God, as he ought to be sought? It is to seek him with a true desire of knowing him, with uprightness of heart, with an humble diffidence of our own understanding, with a resolution of paying the worship that his nature demands, and of obeying his laws. If the heathen philosophers had sought him in this manner, they would not have incurred the just reproaches made to them by St. Paul: their darkness would have been dispelled: they would have been more wise, more virtuous, more religious, more useful to the people, whom they would have withdrawn from error: in short, they would have been Christians before the birth of Jesus Christ, and would have been instructed, as Job was, in the

the truths which are necessary for salvation.

But the blindness, or rather malice of the philosophers of our days is far more deplorable. Were it even granted, that they had written and published many true things concerning creatures; had they also widened the bounds of human knowledge, relating to the objects of the sciences which are purely natural, they cannot certainly be said to have sought God *with piety*. On the contrary, they all have laboured to rob mankind of the lights, which they had received from reason and revelation. They all designedly have meant to banish from the world the first truths; or if they have given God an existence, they have robbed him of the incontestable rights which he has over man, in quality of first principle and ultimate end. The most moderate amongst
them

them have disputed him the power of manifesting to men his pleasure, and his designs after an extraordinary manner, and by no other means than the organ of reason; of obliging them to believe incomprehensible truths, on the authority of his word supported by miraculous signs; and of prescribing to them the manner in which he chose to be honored.

They would not be excusable had they invented these so unreasonable and irreligious systems in the infancy of the arts and sciences, in the midst of idolatrous darkness, and amongst savages and barbarians. How much less so must they be by publishing them in such an enlightened age, in so polished a nation, and in the midst of the pure lights of Christianity.

Whosoever has a sense of so prodigious an extravagance, must clearly see a manifest chastisement of God,
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who punishes in a terrible manner, the bad use that so many geniuses have made of their talents, by consecrating them to pride, vanity and voluptuousness. Some of them perhaps did not mean at first to go the lengths which they have gone; but when once they were made over to their blindness, and their lawless passions, they have broken through all bounds, laid aside all shame, and have loudly preached the most dissolute debauchery, the most entire independence, the most complete irreligion.

For my part I own, that the excess of their errors seems to me inconceivable, and that this mystery of a hidden providence, which abandons man to the errors of his mind, and the depravity of his heart, astonishes me more than the most elevated truths of the Christian religion. Reason is not less a gift of God than faith; and
whosoever

whosoever despises faith and dares to reject it, makes a sacrilegious use of his reason, and deserves that God should suffer him to blind himself more and more.

XL.

Unhappy is he who knows every thing else, and does not know thee. Happy is he who knows thee, though he should be ignorant of every thing else. Book 5. c. 4.

THE HUMAN MIND is formed to know, as the heart is formed to love. When the natural desire of knowing leads to subjects, the knowledge of which is necessary or useful, and confines itself within proper bounds, far from being blameable, it is worthy of praise. The point is, to direct it to what is the most essential for man to know,

know, and only to apply it to other things, according to due measure and subordination.

All nature, all the sciences and arts, even those of amusement, are a vast field open to our inquiries: God only forbids us the knowledge of what is vain and hurtful. But there is an order to be observed even in the things that are lawful; the most important must take the lead; and it is evident that those which relate to God and our duty to him, should be preferred to all others. Every species of knowledge, either useful or even necessary in life, and tending to the good order of society, should give way to this most important concern. With respect to those matters which barely gratify curiosity, which conduce only to enrich the memory, and ornament the mind, they should never be an entire occupation; they should only be dipped
into

into with moderation and great reserve, so as never to become prejudicial to other things, which the quality of a man and a Christian, in our respective stations, forbids us to be ignorant of. If those who have natural dispositions, and an inclination for the sciences, who have leisure for study, on whom even their state of life imposes an obligation of studying, followed, in the distribution of their application and time, the strict rules which God and reason prescribe; if they suppressed that itching which prompts them to a gratification of mere curiosity: if they aimed at excelling in the line that relates to their profession; if those also, whose studies are of free choice, fixed their choice on those branches of knowledge that are more useful than agreeable; if they chose rather to be well versed in one, than to be superficially acquainted with
a great

a great number, thousands of abuses would be retrenched, and thousands of advantages would accrue to mankind. In this supposition, each one would be well informed of his essential duties, and of what he cannot be ignorant of, without prejudice to his conscience. Every profession would have able men, and perfect in their kind; studies of mere amusement would not prejudice duty, and would only be a relaxation of mind, or decent employment of our leisure: we should be less desirous of knowing much than of knowing well; such knowledge would elevate our soul, would form our judgment, would be useful to religion and morals; it would be useful in the exigencies, in the ornament and in the pleasures of society; and men of letters would not be, as they often are, either useless or dangerous to their fellow creatures.

Another

Another rule necessary to be observed, in order to restrain curiosity, and obviate the evils arising from it, is, that in elevated and difficult matters, we should know where to stop; and not expose ourselves to the danger of going astray, by soaring too high; all vain, useless, and subtle questions should be lopt off, and that only that is solid should be attended to, by avoiding as much as possible, all opinions conjectures and systems: in short we ought to be persuaded, that to know that we are ignorant, and why we are ignorant, is not one of the least branches of human science; and that it is one of the strongest proofs of a judicious mind, to acknowledge, without a blush, this kind of ignorance. This is the prudent sobriety which is so much inculcated by St. Paul. How many errors, and those even most ridiculous would it not have prevented, amongst philosophers,

philosophers, divines, and the learned of every description?

Let us be well penetrated with St. Austin's maxim: unhappy is he, who knowing every thing else, does not know God: happy is he who knows God, though he should be ignorant of every thing else. The first part of this maxim well pondered, would convince us of the vanity of all sciences when considered in themselves, and without a relation to God: it would teach us not to applaud ourselves for a knowledge, that is fruitless to our happiness, that serves only to swell our pride, or at most, to procure us some temporal advantage, and brings nothing to us for eternity. When a man has made himself an able geometrician, and is thoroughly in possession of the laws of astronomy; when he has discovered the true system of the world, and penetrated into the

secrets of nature; of what use will it be to him for heaven, if he has neglected to know the true religion, and how to practise it? Of all this what will remain at his death? And what reward has he to expect from God, for a labour that has exhausted him, and perhaps shortened his days? Has God placed him in the world, only to become a great naturalist, a profound mathematician, or a learned chronologist?

But he has done no harm to any one; he has even been useful to others by his learning. That may be; but he has not the less done great harm to himself, and irreparably so, by neglecting what was the most important for him to be acquainted with. He ought, preferably to every other concern, to have instructed himself in religion, and in the obligations of it, to have been punctual in discharging them;

them; he ought to have taken care of his soul, and enriched it with virtues and good works. For this God had created him, this he expected of him, and on this will he judge him.

The other part of this maxim, is proper to console those persons, who from their sex, condition, or any other reason, are not in the way of the study of sciences. If they know God, if they love him, if they serve him with all their heart, what need are they in of any thing else? This science is sufficient to render them happy. They should congratulate themselves on their condition, that dispenses them from being learned, and on their aspiring at becoming so, contrary to the order of nature, and the arrangements of providence. They will gain by it in this life, by saving themselves much trouble and vexation of mind;
and

and in the other, their ignorance will be of no prejudice to them, if they have been verfed in that science which forms good christians and saints.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



ERRATA OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

- Page 1. line 9. read agitations.
— 6. — 22. read happiness like this.
— 79. — 14. read affected.
— 119. — 22. read to stop.
— 123. — 11. read elude.
— 124. — 4. read we were.
— 196. — 8. read metaphysics.
— 241. — 1. read does not.
— 257. — 5. read self-insufficiency.
— 260. — 7. read call.
— 274. — 15. read are so.
— 275. — 1. read what it.
— 337. — 1. read this truth.
— 353. — 2. read unworthy.



